Biblical Hermeneutics and Hebraism in the Early Seventeenth Century
As Reflected in the Work of John Weemse (1579-1636)

A Dissertation Submitted to the Faculty
of Calvin Theological Seminary
in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree
of Doctor of Philosophy

Theological Division

by

Jai-Sung Shim

Grand Rapids, Michigan

May 1998
This dissertation entitled

BIBLICAL HERMENEUTICS AND HEBRAISM
IN THE EARLY SEVENTEENTH CENTURY
AS REFLECTED IN THE WORK OF JOHN WEEMSE (1579-1636)

written by

JAI-SUNG SHIM

and submitted in partial fulfillment of

the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

has been accepted by the faculty of Calvin Theological Seminary

upon the recommendation of the undersigned readers:

Richard A. Muller

Arie C. Leder

Steven Burnett

Gary J. Becker, Academic Dean

Date

June 30, 1996
to Sung-Sook
CONTENTS

Acknowledgments vi

Abbreviations viii

Abstract ix

Chapter

One Introduction: John Weemse and the Problem of Seventeenth-Century Biblical Interpretation 1

1. John Weemse and Seventeenth-Century Exegesis 1
2. A Survey of Previous Scholarship 7
3. Critique and Reappraisal 17
4. Prospectus 19

Two The Life and Work of John Weemse in Context 26

1. Life and Works of Weemse: A Survey 26
2. Weemse’s Sources and Antecedents 37
3. Weemse’s Major Works in Review 44

Three Weemse and Christian Hebraism 67

1. English Christian Hebraists before Weemse 69
2. Weemse and St. Andrews University 91

Four Weemse on Scripture: Doctrinal Orthodoxy and Problems of the Text 100

1. Weemse’s Doctrine of Scripture in Context: Orthodoxy and the Original Text 101
2. Masoretic Studies and Hebrew Philology 126
3. Conclusion 146

Five Theory and Practice: Hermeneutical Advance in the Works of Weemse (Four Helps) 153

1. Line Reading and Marginal Reading 157
2. Right Pointing 167
3. Collation of Scripture with Scripture 172
4. Translation of Scripture 178
5. Conclusion 192

Six  Theory and Practice: Hebrew Custom (Fifth Help) 197

1. Weemse’s Attitude toward Jews 197
2. Employment of Hebrew Culture and Custom for Christian Exegesis 221
   a. Time, Day, and Year 230
   b. The Hebrew Way of Counting Years 237
   c. Passover 239
   d. Civil Judgment 241
   e. Civil Contracts 245
   f. Numbering, Weighing, and Measuring 246
   g. Marriage and Divorce 248
   h. Life and the Sixth Commandment 252

Seven  Theory and Practice: Interpretation and Sense of Scripture 254

1. Hebrew Literary Convention 258
   a. Vivid Expression 260
   b. Counting the Numbers 262
   c. Repetition of Phrases 263
   d. Solecism 264
   e. The Hebrew Says Less and Understands More 267
   f. Affirmative and Negative Statements 268
   g. Language for God and Spiritual Matters 271
   h. Use of Modest Language 273

2. The Sense of Scripture and Its Application 276
   a. Full and Entire Literal Sense 277
   b. Spiritual Application of the Single Literal Sense 295
   c. The Limits of Allegory and Typology in Weemse’s Exegesis 302

Eight  Conclusion 317

Appendix: Propositions 331

Selected Bibliography 334
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

After several years of taking courses and writing this dissertation, it is my great pleasure and honor to acknowledge those who helped make the dissertation a reality. I have used Calvin College and Calvin Theological Seminary’s Hekman Library, libraries of Michigan State University and University of Michigan, and the Huntington Library in San Marino, California. I have also received fine support from various libraries in England. I am deeply grateful to Dr. Norman H. Reid, the Keeper of Manuscripts of the University of St. Andrews Library; Dr. N. J. Mills of the Scottish Record Office in Edinbrugh; Dr. Graham Hogg, the Curator of the British Antiquarian Division of the National Library of Scotland; and Mr. Patrick Mussett, the Senior Assistant Keeper of Archives and Special Collections of the University of Durham. I have also received valuable assistance through correspondence with professor Raphael Loewe in Scotland.

Special words of thanks are due to present and past members of the theology faculty of Calvin Theological Seminary: Dr. James De Jong, Dr. Fred H. Klooster, Dr. Henry Zwaanstra, Dr. Cornelius Plantinga, Jr., Dr. John Cooper, Dr. John Bolt, Dr. Ronald J. Feenstra, and Dr. Calvin van Reken. They not only shaped my theology for many years but also provided fatherly and even friendly support for my scholarship. I express my heartfelt gratitude, honor, and respect to my dissertation supervisor Dr. Richard A. Muller, the P. J. Zondervan Professor of historical theology, who faithfully and patiently guided me through my courses to the completion of this present work. I am very grateful for his advice and suggestions during those exhausting but happy years of
study. Dr. Muller’s extensive knowledge of and passion for research greatly influenced my interest in orthodox theology and the history of biblical exegesis. I express my gratitude to the other members of my dissertation committee: Dr. Arie C. Leder, professor of Old Testament at Calvin Theological Seminary, who faithfully read and corrected my work, and Dr. Stephen G. Burnett, professor of University of Nebraska in Lincoln, who carefully read my manuscript and made valuable suggestions.

I also acknowledge my indebtedness to the staff of the Hekman Library—Dr. Harry Boonstra, Mr. Conrad J. Bult, and especially Miss Kathleen Struck—who searched for and provided rare and old books for me. I have received great help also from Dr. Karin Y. Maag, the director of the H. Henry Meeter Center for Calvin Studies; Mr. Paul W. Fields; and Mrs. Jan Walhout, who taught me English in my college years. They all carefully read my dissertation and provided valuable corrections and suggestions. Dr. Kenneth D. Bratt of Calvin College read and checked my Latin translations. I also gratefully acknowledge the financial assistance that I have received during the last six years. I am thankful to the families and friends who provided the Friend-of-the-Seminary Doctoral Assistantship, which made my research and writing possible.

Finally, I wish to acknowledge the unending love and support of my wife, Sung-Sook, and my children, Paul, David, and Alvin, without which I could not have persisted to this point. They taught me the joy of living in God’s world whenever I came home tired and stressed.

Grand Rapids, Michigan
May 1998
## Abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CHB</td>
<td>Cambridge History of the Bible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DNB</td>
<td>Dictionary of National Biography</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exercitations</td>
<td>Exercitations Divine. Containing diverse Questions and Solutions for the right understanding of the Scriptures...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JQR</td>
<td>Jewish Quarterly Review</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moral Law I</td>
<td>The Workes of Mr. John Weemse...Containing an Exposition of the Morall Law...(containing explication of the first table of the Moral Law)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moral Law II</td>
<td>An Exposition of the Second Table of the Morall Law...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRRD</td>
<td>Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Synagogue</td>
<td>Christian Synagogue. Wherein is contained the diverse Reading, The right Pointing, Translation, and Collation of Scripture with Scripture...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transactions</td>
<td>Transactions of the Jewish Historical Society of England</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WA</td>
<td>D. Martin Luthers Werke: Kritische Gesamtausgabe</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ABSTRACT

This dissertation presents a contextual and historical understanding of hermeneutics and exegesis in the early seventeenth century, in the form of a study of the biblical exegete and Hebraist, John Weemse of Lathocker and Prebend of Durham. This study argues both for the continuity of early seventeenth-century biblical exegesis with Reformation exegesis and for the progress of Protestant exegesis after the Reformation.

In substantial similarity to the Reformers with regard to the doctrine of Scripture and to exegetical principles, the foundation of Weemse’s exegesis was reading Scripture in its original languages. He enriched his efforts through grammatical and textual studies of masoretic scholarship with its highly scholarly apparatus, through study of Hebrew literary convention, and through a broad knowledge of Hebrew customs and tradition. Weemse made a significant contribution in the history of biblical interpretation by making positive use of Hebraica and Judaica to establish a critical basis for orthodox Christian biblical exegesis. Another significant mark of post-Reformation exegesis was the instrumental use of scholasticism and humanism for a Christian reading of Scripture.

In a technical sense, Weemse’s post-Reformation biblical hermeneutic is neither medieval nor critical and historical in the modern sense; it is, in the tradition of the Reformation, concentrated on the meaning of Scripture as drawn from a grammatical, literal, textual, and contextual understanding. At the same time, his exegesis is like medieval exegesis in that it is church exegesis. It is like Reformation exegesis in that it
too has as its motto that Scripture is the living Word of God to the church at present. Weemse’s post-Reformation biblical exegesis is not a precursor of the modern critical method; it was rather a pre-critical exegesis, even though it was supported by a more finely tuned theological, linguistic, and logical apparatus than the Reformers employed. This development of the orthodox period is not to be understood as a deviation from Reformation principles but as an answer to the challenge of the period that came from critical, philological study to maintain and refine the heritage of the Reformation theology.
Chapter One

Introduction: John Weemse and the Problem of Seventeenth-Century Biblical Interpretation

1. John Weemse and Seventeenth-Century Exegesis

Seventeenth-century exegetes have long been neglected, compared to those of the sixteenth century. The history of biblical scholarship of the seventeenth century is a "virtually uncultivated and barely surveyed field."¹ There are some introductions such as *The Cambridge History of the Bible* and Dean Freiday's work, but except for studies on Constantijn L’Empereur,² John Lightfoot,³ and Johannes Buxtorf,⁴ there are virtually no monographs on the subject.

The English exegete and Hebraist John Weemse of Lathocker and prebend of Durham is an ideal subject for such a study. Weemse wrote extensively on the subject of biblical hermeneutics and exegesis from 1620 to his death in 1636. His works were well

---


known, and he was admired by students and ministers as a hermeneutical scholar and
exegete. The number of editions of his major work, *The Christian Synagogue*, indicates
the popularity of his teaching in the mid-seventeenth century. It was translated into Latin
and published in Leiden in 1660, twenty-four years after Weemse’s death.⁵

Weemse’s work on biblical interpretation is a good example of scholarly
achievement of his day, but he was an ordinary scholar in the sense that he did not create
a new theology or develop new ideas. Though he pioneered the use of Hebraica and
Judaica for a Christian understanding of Scripture and advocated Cappel’s theory of
Hebrew vowel-points and accents in advance of his orthodox contemporaries, his works
show little originality in biblical hermeneutics or theology. This very lack of originality
in theology and biblical hermeneutics helps to explain why Weemse’s work is a standard
example of hermeneutic manuals of post-Reformation Reformed theology. His works
show both hermeneutical theories and practices of biblical interpretation. While his *The
Christian Synagogue* and *Exercitations Divine* exhibit the best available theories and
tools of biblical exegesis, his other works on moral laws, ceremonial laws, and judicial
laws provide abundant examples of his exegetical practice.

As a window on the early seventeenth century’s interpretive mind, Weemse
illuminates the Reformed orthodox interpretation of the period. By analyzing Weemse’s
biblical scholarship in dialogue with his predecessors and contemporaries, this

---

dissertation will examine the Reformed orthodox understanding of Scripture in its proper historical context with reference to the standard issues of continuity and discontinuity between the early Reformers and their successors in the later period against their historical background. Seventeenth-century Protestants did not create their doctrine of biblical interpretation in a vacuum; they selected and developed a certain line of exegetical tradition that drew on medieval practice and was refined within the Reformation context. This study will focus specifically on the Reformed tradition in England, though it will also relate this tradition to the Continental development of humanist trilingual studies and Hebrew scholarship.

Weemse has been virtually unknown outside the ecclesiastical history of the Scottish church and biographical dictionaries, except for a few literary studies of the Bible. D. G. M. Stalker from Scotland published an article in 1944 about Weemse,

---


which is an introduction to his life as both a Presbyterian ecclesiastical leader and a
Reformed exegete. John Bowman documented Weemse’s vast knowledge of the
Hebrew language and rabbinic literature and considered his possible relationship to the
readmission of Jews to England in the middle of seventeenth century. Stalker
summarized the biblical scholarship of Weemse:

The book [Christian Synagogue] well illustrates Weemse’s general method
of treatment of Scripture subjects. It is, to set down a proposition, to
establish it from Scripture, to answer, from Scripture, any objections that
seem to rise against it, and then (this is usual but not invariable) to bring
confirmatory proofs of it either from philosophy or general knowledge, or
from the writings of the Jews or the Fathers.

Biblical interpretation was an important subject for theology of the period, for the
method of formulation of the Reformed orthodox theology should be understood within
the long-held Christian tradition that God and Scripture are the two foundational
principles for theology. This long tradition, begun in medieval theology, was still alive
and well among the Reformed orthodox theologians after the Reformation. This is the
very reason why biblical hermeneutic and exegetical practice are important for both
Reformation and post-Reformation theologians, especially when one understands that
both the Reformers and their successors had to maintain the same or similar doctrines as

---

8 D. G. M. Stalker, “John Weemse of Lathocker, One of Scotland’s Early Hebraists,” Scottish Church


11 Muller, PRRD, 2:3-15; Cf. with Kenneth Hagen who draws a radical shift between “medieval-early
Reformation” and the “modern” theology which began at the middle of the sixteenth century, “The History
of Scripture in the Church,” in The Bible in the Churches: How Various Christians Interpret the Scriptures,
the Catholics even after Protestants dropped the traditional medieval *quadriga* and its exegetical results.

Protestant theologians of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries understood Scripture as the living Word of God that is true and normative for the contemporary church. They saw it as the sole foundation from which church doctrines were to be formulated. This foundational principle of Protestant theology, established by the Reformers, accounts for the subsequent importance of biblical interpretation for their successors. The growing importance of biblical interpretation within the context of continuing polemics with the Catholics led the Protestant church to textual and philological studies of the Bible, which in turn ushered in the trilingual study in the academy, for both Catholics and Protestants. The late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries witnessed a vigorous production of manuals on biblical interpretation. All the manuals on biblical interpretation within the Reformed circle stressed the formal method of drawing church doctrines out of biblical exegesis.

Hermeneutic manuals had been published in the British Isles before Weemse wrote his masterpiece, *The Christian Synagogue*, in 1623, but most of them were dogmatic in character and did not evidence or make use of the rabbinic material and philological-critical scholarship. The development of masoretic studies and the use of the Hebrew language in theological studies came later in the British Isles than on the Continent. In this theological climate, Weemse made a significant contribution to the history of interpretation by utilizing the rabbinic literature and the text-critical
scholarship of his time positively to find the true meanings of Scripture.\textsuperscript{12} He used original languages, grammatical studies, masoretic apparatus, and Hebrew customs and traditions in his interpretation of Scripture and incorporated the results into Protestant theology.

Weemse’s exegesis was neither traditional medieval nor modern historical-critical. Rather, he concentrated on the meaning of Scripture based on a grammatical, literal, textual, and contextual understanding. At the same time, his exegesis maintains commonality with medieval exegesis—the orthodox exegesis is church exegesis—and with the Reformers’ motto that Scripture is the living Word of God to the church at present. Weemse emphasizes the occasion, scope, and content of a biblical passage for the purpose of edification within a church setting. Thus, his exegesis, like medieval exegesis, has a rich understanding of the relationship between the literal sense and the mystical sense but he rejects diverse senses of a Scriptural text. His exegesis, like that of other seventeenth-century exegetes, is not a precursor of the modern critical method; it was still a form of so-called “pre-critical” exegesis, even though it was supported by a more finely tuned theological, linguistic, and logical apparatus than the Reformers

\textsuperscript{12} The term “critical,” in this dissertation, in regard to early seventeenth-century biblical scholarship does not mean modern higher critical method, but instead a scientific method which used more grammatical and philological tools compared to the earlier period. Erwin I. J. Rosenthal explains the scientific method used in early seventeenth biblical scholarship in this way, “These studies [Hebrew studies of the early seventeenth century], it is true, were pursued in the first place for Christian ends, but the opening up of Rabbinic sources on lines similar to, though not identical with, the re-emergence of Classical texts, resulted in a more scientific method of Biblical study, with the help of grammar and lexicography. Needless to say, the Hebrew Language was studied because it was the original tongue of Holy Writ. Mastery of it made possible not only a better, but the only exact and true, understanding of the Word of God.” in “Edward Lively: Cambridge Hebraist” in Essays and Studies Presented to Stanley Arthur Cook... in Celebration of His Seventy-fifth Birthday, 12 April 1948, ed. University of Cambridge, Board of the Faculty of Divinity, (London: Taylor’s Foreign Press, 1950), p. 99.
employed. This development within the orthodox period is not to be understood as a deviation from Reformation principles but as an answer to the challenge of the period that came from text-critical and philological literature to maintain and refine in detailed languages the heritage of Reformation theology.

2. A Survey of Previous Scholarship

Until very recently, scholarly assessments of Protestant orthodox biblical interpretation have repeated with very little variation the negative view of post-Reformation exegesis offered in the last century by Frederic W. Farrar.\(^{13}\) This negative assessment, moreover, has been paralleled and heavily influenced by the general assessment of Protestant orthodox theology as a rationalistic and "scholastic" theology that deviated from the thought of the Reformers. Typical of this view is Basil Hall's claim, along with others, that, in the theologies of Beza and Perkins, "biblical exegesis became subordinated to a restored Aristotelianism."\(^{14}\) Similarly, Brian Armstrong


presents a radical disjunction between the Reformers and the later Reformed theologians, on the one hand, and between “humanists” and “scholastics,” on the other hand. In distinguishing the orthodox from the Renaissance humanist spirit, he characterizes the orthodox as employing a rational method for theology. He states that “Protestant Scholasticism” asserts “religious truth on the basis of deductive ratiocination from given assumptions or principles … invariably based upon an Aristotelian philosophical commitment and so relates to medieval scholasticism … so reason assumes at least equal standing with faith.”

The negative assessment of Protestant orthodox biblical interpretation stems from two distinctly different lines of argumentation. The first line of argument is represented by Farrar and Kraeling. They contrasted Reformation scholarship and orthodox biblical scholarships by making a distinction between humanism and dogmatism, as if they are

---


not compatible. They claimed that, unlike Erasmus, Luther, Melanchthon, and Zwingli, who proved to be true humanists in their exegesis, Calvin was more a dogmatist than a humanist.\textsuperscript{17} Calvin’s exegesis, according to them, was characterized by his ruthless logical rigidity on the divine decree and his hollow orthodoxy. Given his assessment of Calvin, who allegedly used little of secular wisdom, it is even surprising for Kraeling to find his “far-reaching insight into the historical conditioning of Scripture.”\textsuperscript{18}

For Farrar and Kraeling, the orthodox biblical hermeneutic was an extension of Calvin’s dogmatism. According to their assessment, the Protestant orthodox biblical interpretation was marred by confessionalism, orientation toward dogmatic system, and bitter polemics. The Renaissance humanist spirit was totally overshadowed by scholasticism; the Protestant orthodoxy “soon parted company with free learning, turned its back upon culture, held out no hand to awaking science, and lost itself in a maze of theological controversies.” Trilingual studies and Hebraism were reduced to the holy languages of the Bible, and everything in the Bible was dogmatically believed. For example, the Hebrew vowel-points were dogmatically believed to be of divine origin. Within this dogmatic system of theology, they said, Scripture was reduced to producing “proof-texts” for building dogma, and the long-used doctrine of analogy of faith or analogy of Scripture was considered to be “the pretext for regarding the Bible as a sort of

\textsuperscript{17} Farrar, \textit{History}, pp. 316-54; Kraeling, \textit{The Old Testament}, pp. 21-32.

quartz-bed."**19** Farrar's conclusion concerning Protestant orthodox biblical interpretation is noteworthy:

Of course under such as system true exegesis became impossible. The tone of it became petty, jealous, unspiritual, and it was perpetually hunting after "emphases" which were purely imaginary. Some fragments of former truth were indeed preserved in Hermeneutic treatises; but they were repeated without being utilised. In historic, archaeological, and linguistic researches, amid much that was absurd and irrelevant, there was some accumulation of *materials* for the understanding of Scripture. But a fettered and suspicious exegesis is always sterile, and the living power of Scripture, together with all progress in its comprehension, ceases when it is turned into an idol.**20**

Yet Farrar offers no documentary evidence for his claims. On the one hand, he consistently underestimates the progress of trilingual scholarship and Hebrew studies in the Christian world in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, while at the same time, he asserts a stereotyped concept of seventeenth-century polemic and dogmatism. Farrar does not actually analyze a single hermeneutical manual, nor does he examine the theologians in the orthodox period.

The second line of argument is set out by a group of modern scholars who favor Calvin's exegesis and claims a radical discontinuity between his exegesis and the orthodox exegesis, while holding a similarly pejorative view of orthodox biblical interpretation. This view is presented by Grant, Hall, Fullerton, Hayes, and Prussner.

This group's major difference from the first is that they saw Calvin as a humanist

---


exegete, but like the first group, they saw a radical disjunction between humanism and scholasticism. They understood humanism to be a Renaissance movement of trilingual study—that is, to read ancient texts from the “very fountain of the original language”—while Protestant scholastic dogmatism was merely a reacquisition of the medieval scholastic method for Protestant dogma.

Among those who present this view, Fullerton and Freiday offer comparatively extensive studies of the subject in question. Both argue that orthodox biblical exegesis deviated from Reformation principles of interpretation. Freiday drastically overestimates the discontinuity between late medieval biblical exegesis and exegesis of the Reformation:

The rapid upgrading of both text and translations which occurred during the 16th and 17th Centuries was accompanied by drastic changes in the interpretation of the Bible. A clear-cut break with medieval exegesis at the very beginning of our era was basic to most of these. Freiday explains the “clear-cut break” between Reformation, post-Reformation exegesis and medieval exegesis as having parts. One part is the complete rejection of “the four-sense system” of the medieval practice; the other is the rejection of medieval

---


scholasticism. He assumes the scholastic method to be the employment of "the use of Aristotelian logic as well as appeal to the Fathers."²³

Fullerton's argument for the radical disjunction between the Reformers' exegesis and post-Reformation orthodox exegesis is controlled by his assumed distinction between the Protestant dogmatic mind and the Protestant exegetical mind. This distinction is notably presented, according to him, by their exegeses of the Old Testament prophecies. By the dogmatic mind he means the Protestant theological tendency to read the single sense of prophecy that is drawn as a mystical sense from the New Testament authors; and by the exegetical mind he means the more academic tendency to draw on the historical-literal interpretation from within the Old Testament itself. This distinction anticipates, for Fullerton, an initial conflict in Calvin's exegesis itself and a later incompatibility between exegetical principle and dogmatic interest, and the final breakdown of the Reformed principle of exegesis in the post-Reformation biblical interpretation.

Fullerton's perspective of interpreting the history of biblical interpretation reads modern scientific issues into Reformation and post-Reformation exegeses, thus creating an ahistorical evaluation of them. An initial look at his perspective raises a doubt whether Calvin's theological mind was really in conflict with his exegetical mind. Assuming the existence of the inner conflict, Fullerton argues that this initial conflict of Calvin developed into the final breakdown in orthodox exegesis, thus implying in fact Calvin's responsibility for the later allegedly dogmatic development. At the center of this

argument lies the important issue: Within what kind of theological framework, modern scientific or pre-modern pre-critical, the Reformers and orthodox theologians established theological system out of biblical exegesis?

According to Fullerton, Calvin’s concept of the literal sense was a very narrow understanding. Fullerton understands the Reformation principle of exegesis by identifying the literal sense with the historical. On the other hand on the dogmatic side Calvin had the doctrine of agreement in the Old Testament and the New Testament. This harmony between the Testaments also supports in a claiming for the clarity of sense of the content of Scripture against Catholic opposition. This agreement means in a practical sense a Reformation exegetical principle that Scripture interprets Scripture. Having understood Calvin in this dichotomizing way, Fullerton anticipates an initial conflict between those two principles of Reformation exegesis. However, he says Calvin managed to avoid this conflict by his critical ability which was expressed by his frank admission of the differences between the Old Testament passages and New Testament citation of them, and by a restricted use of typology. Calvin did not admit that the New Testament writers distorted or twisted the proper meaning of the Old Testament passages in their citation in the New, but he indeed granted some “differences” of the two. His use of typology is restricted to the Psalms and prophecies that have clear evidences of
relationship between type and antitype.\textsuperscript{24} "This means that Calvin’s principle of exegesis really triumphed over his dogmatic theories."\textsuperscript{25}

For Fullerton, biblical interpretation of the post-Reformation period was characterized by the discontinuity of Calvin’s exegetical principles. Fullerton’s perspective of analysis, and especially his major scheme of Calvin against Calvinists, contains in itself a weakness because he did not take into account the varieties of Reformed exegesis among the contemporaries of Calvin. The discontinuity in orthodox biblical interpretation was, according to him, caused by the Protestant polemic with the Catholics. It is true that the refinement of orthodox doctrine of Scripture and its interpretation was formulated in and through the polemic with Catholic opponents. However, orthodox doctrine of infallibility of Scripture was not uniformly shaped in terms of its content, text, and canon. For example, Fullerton describes the orthodox doctrine as completely rigid and dogmatic, having nothing to do with critical discipline, which is expressed by Johannes Buxtorf and John Owen’s theory of Hebrew vowel points.\textsuperscript{26} Again, he does not take the various explanations of the doctrine into his account of orthodox theology, nor does he make a closer examination of positive exegetical work of the period in the interest of reductionistic thinking. Fullerton asserts that biblical exegesis of this period was certainly marred by this dogmatic interest. For him, dogmatic

\textsuperscript{24} Fullerton, \textit{Prophecy and Authority}, pp. 133-61.

\textsuperscript{25} Fullerton, \textit{Prophecy and Authority}, p. 160.

\textsuperscript{26} Fullerton, \textit{Prophecy and Authority}, pp. 169-70.
interest in the doctrine of Scripture led the orthodox to an excessive use of typological interpretations of the Old Testament in their desire to support New Testament doctrines. The final evaluation of Fullerton’s description of orthodox interpretation in relationship to Calvin follows:

Now all this means that the Reformation principle of exegesis, namely, the one grammatico-historical sense, is in the way of being completely abandoned. We have seen how Calvin’s theories of typology endangered this principle but how his sober historical sense usually kept him from any fanciful application of his theories. This was not the case with those who came after him. Typology, instead of being restricted by exegesis, now completely dominates it, until at last we actually have the admission that there is more than the one sense of Scripture.27

Some conclusions can be drawn concerning post-Reformation biblical hermeneutics from this analysis by Fullerton. First, he concludes that the post-Reformation exegesis discarded exegesis for dogma, abandoning the Reformation principle of the single literal sense and adopting the medieval scholastic method of diverse senses of Scripture.28 Underlying this conclusion is the issue of what the literal sense meant and how it was used in the church context by the Reformers and their successors in the seventeenth century. Second, Fullerton argues that there existed a radical disjunction between orthodox biblical scholarship and humanistic achievement. This disjunction invites a closer study of how orthodox biblical hermeneutics was related to the emerging tri-lingual scholarship and Hebraism of the period.

---

27 Fullerton, Prophecy and Authority, p. 175.

28 Fullerton, Prophecy and Authority, pp. 150, 159, 165-80.
A similar view is presented by James Livingstone\textsuperscript{29} and Basil Willey.\textsuperscript{30} Willey argues that the major problem of orthodox biblical interpretation was philosophical. By focusing more on philosophical development which occurred generally outside the interest of the church, this group of scholars neglected the churchly hermeneutic of the orthodox tradition. According to Willey:

How to fit a supernaturalist and poetic scripture into the new world-scheme, how to reconcile Jehovah with the ontologically-certified Dieu of Descartes, and the whole miraculous structure of Christianity with the new ‘philosophical’ principles, this was a major problem confronting the critical intelligence of the age.\textsuperscript{31}

A related but somewhat milder view is provided by Terrien who characterizes the orthodox exegesis as “the dogmatic intolerance,” on the one hand, and the emergence of more scientific and rationalistic method, on the other, which was evidenced, according to him, by Cappel’s later works and by such philosophers as Thomas Hobbes and Baruch Spinoza.\textsuperscript{32}

---


\textsuperscript{30} Basil Willey, \textit{The Seventeenth Century Background: The Thought of the Age in Relation to Religion & Poetry} (Garden City: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1953).

\textsuperscript{31} Willey, \textit{The Seventeenth Century Background}, p. 65.

3. Critique and Reappraisal

A preliminary assessment of the older scholarship indicates at least five significant problems. The first is an unwillingness to recognize diversity in the later Reformed tradition of biblical exegesis. The designation, “Calvin and the Calvinist,” made popular by Hall, implies mistaken assumptions that Calvin was the sole proponent of the Reformed tradition and that the orthodox who distinguished themselves from Calvin deviated from the Reformed tradition. This view prevents modern readers from understanding both the refined diversity among the orthodox biblical scholars and the progress they made in the early seventeenth century. The second mistake is caused by the view that was just described. It is the assumption of utter discontinuity between Reformation biblical scholarship, usually taking Calvin’s work as its representative, and orthodox biblical scholarship. Third, most of the older modern assessments of orthodox hermeneutics are based on stereotypical analyses of the intellectual climate of the seventeenth century, as characterized by rationalism and polemical dogmatism. In this way, biblical hermeneutics, as well as the theology, of post-Reformation orthodoxy were evaluated by elements other than theology and biblical hermeneutics themselves. In consequence, many modern assessments read philosophical and scientific influences of the late seventeenth century into early orthodox biblical hermeneutics. Fourth, the older modern scholarship severs scholastic method from humanist philological interest in doing theology and exegesis, as if theologians and exegetes exclusively followed one approach or the other. Fifth, it had a tendency to assess the seventeenth-century biblical
interpretation exclusively either in terms of polemical literature or in terms of a philosophical influence.

A series of recent works have argued against these negative assessments. In accord with recent studies that re-evaluate the theology of Protestant orthodoxy, they all document the general continuity between the orthodox biblical interpretation and the early Reformation and even medieval biblical interpretation.\textsuperscript{33} They are the works of Muller, Laplanche,\textsuperscript{34} Burnett, Sheppard,\textsuperscript{35} Gane,\textsuperscript{36} and articles in \textit{Le Grand Siècle et la }


\textsuperscript{34} François Laplanche, \textit{La Bible en France entre Mythe et Critique (XVI-XIX siècle)} (Paris: Albin Michel, 1994).


Moreover, they argue that Protestant orthodox biblical interpretation stood in the old tradition of pre-critical reading of Scripture, despite the hermeneutical change of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, rather than leaning toward the rationalizing tendency of eighteenth century exegesis.

4. Prospectus

Only detailed study of individual seventeenth-century exegetes can counter the pejorative generalizations recently made by scholars like Hall, Kraeling, Grant, Hayes, and Prussner. By examining both the hermeneutic manuals and the exegetical practices of Reformed orthodox theologians, this study will test whether their biblical interpretation was indeed dogmatic, unspiritual and rationalistic, and whether the rise of rationalistic philosophy of the seventeenth century actually affected the churchly exegesis of the orthodox theology, or whether their exegesis stood in relative continuity with the methods of the Renaissance and Reformation.

The study will have two focal points. The first will be the relationship of the Reformed orthodox biblical scholarship to the then growing humanist tri-lingual studies and use of Judaica and Hebraica. Much of the scholarship posits a radical disjunction between the pre-critical orthodox exegesis and humanist philological scholarship with the result that the orthodox, given their polemics and their pre-conceived dogmas of the Holy

---

Spirit and Scripture, did not use the philological-critical apparatus of the day. By saying that “the new art of critical evaluation” came only with Capellus, Morinus, Simon, and Spencer, Kraeling denied that orthodox exegesis of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries used the philological tools for their churchly exegesis.38

Yet, even in this hostile atmosphere with the Roman church and intra-Protestant struggles, Protestant theologians and exegetes did not simply spend their energies on polemical concerns. As Burnett points out effectively, it is worthwhile to remember that it was within this period of theological contention that biblical studies were advanced, set forth, and disseminated in both universities which were confessional institutions that followed particular creeds and in the inter-confessional Republic of Letters. In other words, positive studies of biblical interpretation and theology of this period should not be damaged by a stereotypical evaluation of the period as a solely polemical era. The late sixteenth and early seventeenth century witnessed an advance of textual and linguistic studies of the Bible.39 Daiches’ representation of the Hebrew scholarship that was used in producing the translation of the King James Version directly from the Hebrew text

38 Kraeling, The Old Testament, p. 43.


The second focal point will be in understanding pre-critical interpretation of Scripture in the period in question in order to reveal whether or not the orthodox biblical scholarship was based on pre-conceived dogma and polemics or on the philosophical ground of Aristotle, Descartes, or Spinoza.

Although many theological writings of the seventeenth century are polemical, reflecting various intra-Christian disputes, or Christian debate with the Jews, a closer examination will show that they cannot be dismissed as polemical, dogmatic, or rationalistic as Farrar and Hall claimed. The works of William Whitaker\footnote{William Whitaker, *A Disputation on Holy Scripture, Against the Papists, especially Bellarmine and Stapleton* (1588, repr., tr. William Fitzgerald, Cambridge: The Cambridge University Press, 1849).} and William Fulke\footnote{William Fulke, *A Defence of the Sincere and True Translations of the Holy Scriptures into the English Tongue, against the Cavils of Gregory Martin*, The Parker Society. ed. Charles Henry Hartshorne, (1583, repr., Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1863).} are, as their titles illustrate, good examples of polemical literature in the late sixteenth century Protestant work. Their purpose was to defend the orthodox Reformed doctrine of Scripture against the slander of the Roman church. However, their writings were more well organized, erudite doctrinal work or textual work, in a positive sense, than a mere defense or assault against the Roman church. Fulke based his discussion of the right translation of Scripture on a highly scholarly textual and philological study. On
the subject of Scriptural interpretation, which was one of the most crucial debates between the Roman and Protestant churches, Whitaker represented quite fairly, before he criticized them, the four great arguments that were settled in the council of Trent against the Reformation and reiterated by Stapleton in his day. This representation is followed by his main argument for the Reformed doctrine that is arranged in sixteen parts. His arguments are not made in a sterile or unspiritual antagonism, but rather a well-organized and defined Reformation doctrine of Scripture drawing from the biblical teaching utilizing the best available authorities of his days, the medieval scholars, and early Church Fathers.43

In order to examine the biblical scholarship of post-Reformation Reformed orthodoxy, this study will analyze in detail the biblical scholarship of John Weemse in dialogue with his predecessors and contemporaries. Using the example of Weemse, this study will assess the relationship of the post-Reformation theology to biblical exegesis and shed light on the orthodox doctrines of Scripture and interpretation. Weemse’s work evidences an advance in Christian exegesis by way of development of textual criticism, employment of Rabbinical material, a sophisticated concept of the literal sense of Scripture, and broad use of typology. The pre-critical, churchly exegesis evidences a substantial continuity with the tradition of Reformation exegesis, in the altered hermeneutical situation of the seventeenth century. The study will also show, based on the example of Weemse, the orthodox exegetes’ instrumental use of scholastic tools in an

43 Whitaker, A Disputation, pp. 410-66.
effort to find churchly meaning of Scripture, and help to identify their work as a form of churchly, pre-critical exegesis, even with the increasing use of textual and historical apparatus in the seventeenth century.

The second chapter will document Weemse’s life as an ecclesiastical leader, a Christian Hebraist, and biblical exegete. It will also review Weemse’s major works along with the sources and antecedents of Weemse’s Christian Hebraism. The first part of the third chapter describes the development of tri-lingual scholarship in the British Isles in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. Its second part describes the academic setting within which Weemse’s Hebraism was established. This chapter will also examine Weemse’s scholarship within the wider Hebrew scholarship of continental Europe. The second and third chapters argue that by the early seventeenth century many Hebrew texts and scholarly tools were available for Christian study of Scripture in its original languages. This background provides the historical setting that leads to the conclusion that early seventeenth-century Reformed biblical study was highly scholarly work, not dogmatically oriented, but greatly advanced by employment of Judaica and Hebraica.

The following chapters examine scholarly treatment of Scripture in the period in question, with Weemse’s work as a representative of its hermeneutical and exegetical work. These chapters provide evidences of highly linguistic and textual study of Scripture. Chapter four deals with Weemse’s orthodox doctrine of Scripture that he inherited from the early Reformers. In this section, his employment of the masoretic
study of the Hebrew Bible will be explained by examining his understanding of the
three significant textual issues of the Hebrew Bible—the origin and value of vowel-points
and accents of the Hebrew text, the nature and function of marginal readings of the
masoretic text, and the issue of alleged corruption inserted by the Jews.

Weemse’s wide knowledge of masoretic scholarship produced a newer method of
interpreting Scripture, which his predecessors did not know. The following three
chapters will focus on Weemse’s theories and practices of biblical interpretation. In this
section, his textual, linguistic scholarship is illustrated by his “five helps” for better
understanding of Scripture. Chapter five will deal with the four textual-philological
helps, drawn from the masoretic study of the Hebrew Bible. Chapter six will discuss
Weemse’s fifth help for understanding Scripture, that is, the employment of Hebrew
culture and tradition for Christian understanding of Scripture. This chapter will also
explore Weemse’s attitude toward Jews and Jewish biblical scholarship.

All the theories and practices of interpretation explained so far will lead, in the
seventh Chapter, toward Weemse’s ultimate goal of biblical scholarship—understanding
the right sense of Scripture. This chapter will examine Weemse’s literary study of the
Hebrew text—the customary Jewish literary conventions that appear in the Hebrew Bible.
In the end it will examine his formulation of the literal sense, with special attention to the
nuanced relationship of the literal sense to the spiritual teaching and preaching in the
church context. Overall, Weemse’s hermeneutical principles show quite flexible and
useful and explain a great many biblical perplexities in a sound way. These last three
chapters will eventually indicate the main characteristics of post-Reformation
Reformed orthodox biblical scholarship. In the conclusion, a summary of these main
features will help to evaluate the earlier modern historians’ negative assessment of
Reformed orthodox theology and biblical interpretation and will relocate them in the
broad continuity that extends from medieval theology through Reformation theology.
Chapter Two

The Life and Work of John Weemse in Context

1. Life and Works of Weemse: A Survey

John Weemse was born about 1579 in the East Neuk of Fife, at Lathocker, Scotland.\(^1\) He matriculated at St. Andrews University when he was seventeen years of age and paid fees “at the rate appropriate to the sons of small landowners and professional men.” The record of the university shows that he was awarded the B. A. degree in 1599 and an M. A. in 1600.\(^2\) He did not seek parish ministry immediately after his acquiring the degrees. In 1608 he was appointed by the general assembly of Linlithgow to a charge in Hutton in Berwickshire. The record of the general assembly shows his academic gifts and general disposition for the church. He was recognized “as one of the best-learned and disposed for peace of those on the side of the ministers,” and though he tended toward Scottish Presbyterianism, he worked hard “for maintaining unity

---


\(^2\) Dr. Norman H. Reid, the keeper of manuscripts of the University of St. Andrews Library, kindly sent me the university record on John Weemse.
among the brethren who were considered as tending to Episcopacy.” From this first ministry he was transferred to Dunse in 1613.

As the Scottish church struggled with the issues of church government between the Anglicans and Presbyterians, Weemse’s academic gifts and peaceful disposition were much needed. Stalker cited *The Booke of the Universall Kirk of Scotland* to illustrate the general church situation of Weemse’s day—“cause of eylists, qwik is said to aryse upon diversitie of opiniones, because these diversities of opinions results upon different judgements among the brethren, concerning the externall goverment and discipline of the Kirk.” Whether Weemse wanted or not, history had thrown him into the center of the Scottish church controversies.

From 1597 to the end of the first quarter of the seventeenth century the Scottish church was in constant conflict with the Crown. The Scottish church was divided into two parties, one submissive to the King’s wishes and supporting Episcopalian church government and theology, the other upholding a Calvinistic Presbyterian church system. During these years, in controversies with advocates of episcopacy, Weemse played a prominent role as a representative of Presbyterian ministers. In the assembly of Perth (1618) there were disagreements about theology and church discipline among Episcopalian and Presbyterian ministers. The issues at stance were the Five Articles of Perth—kneeling in the act of receiving communion, feasting five holy days, Episcopal

---


confirmation, private baptism, and private communion. Weemse was one of "the cheefe reasoners against the articles in ... open Assemblie." As a result he was summoned along with several other ministers in 1620 to the Archbishop to answer the charge of contumacy in not carrying out the format of the services prescribed by the Perth assembly.

Calderwood records "Master John Weyms" as the first in the list of the six ministers "for not preaching upon holie dayes, and not ministering the Communion conforme to the conclusions of Perth Assemblie." After some meetings, he was called before the Court of High Commission. He and three moderators of three presbyteries met with Archbishop Spottiswood. They were again asked to comply to the five articles of Perth. Weemse replied, "that were as evill as kneeling, for that were to doe directlie against the institution; therefor we will never doe [it.]" On the second of March he and other men were dismissed with a cautious reprimand from the Archbishop, "ye will be quyet, and not hinder others who have promised, sworne, and subscribed." The Five Articles of Perth was ratified by Parliament in 1621, but "never universally obeyed."

These years belonged to the period of turmoil between the Anglican church polity and

---


Presbyterian system which inclined toward Calvinistic theology. Within this turmoil, albeit Weemse and other Presbyterian ministers failed to overturn the Five Articles, the decisions made at the Reformed Synod of Dordt came as “a great comfort” and became “the touchstone of Calvinist orthodox in Scotland for much of the seventeenth century.”

The years 1620-21 were a “turning point” for Weemse’s calling as a minister, for after the conference with Archbishop Spottiswood he withdrew himself from ecclesiastical affairs and dedicated himself completely to the study of biblical interpretation. From this time on he produced voluminous works aimed at guiding ministers’ teaching and preaching till his death in 1636. What caused him to break away so completely from the conflicts within the Scottish church and dedicate himself to the study of Scripture? Though the extant record does not reveal any direct reasons why he did so, Weemse’s interest in and connection to Hebrew studies of his day within the particular situation of the church might provide some clue from which one can conjecture possible reasons. Weemse’s withdrawal from ecclesiastical affairs might have had some relationship to his linguistic study of the Bible, which must have reached some degree of competence by the time of his withdrawal from church affairs. For he was a product of the Protestant reformation movement of theological curriculum at St. Andrews University. The reformation of the theological curriculum in the St. Mary’s College of the university was carried out by Andrew Melville from around the year of Weemse’s

---

birth till it was repealed by the same Parliament of 1621 which ratified the Five Articles of Perth. Stalker attempts to create a picture of the causes from diverse pieces of Weemse’s life and works and suggests that he left ecclesiastical affairs, in which he had a prominent part for many years, for the peace of the church.11

At this time, Weemse also abruptly altered his opinion about the conflicts between the Presbyterian church and the Episcopalian English church. For example, in 1618 he vigorously opposed the Episcopalian church polity, but by 1623 he dedicated his first book, The Christian Synagogue, to the Earl of Melrose, an Episcopalian champion in Scotland. More than that, he dedicated all of his books to Episcopalian leaders. Weemse did not lay aside his Presbyterian heritage, but he pleaded for the common Christian heritage “for wee have one Lord, one faith, one baptisme, one God and Father of us all; We live all under one gratious King.”12 Upon this common ground he sought Anglican patrons to effectively advance his work of biblical interpretation for the benefit of the church. He wrote the following reason for dedicating his work to the Earl of Melrose: “So where great men are averse to Learning, the spirits which otherwise would blossome, will wither, and decay; but where it is upholden by men of higher place, it is like a fountaine of living water.”13 In another place Weemse dedicated his work of biblical


interpretation to Sir Thomas Covtenrie Knight to whom he himself was "seeming a stranger."

...the desire I have, that others may reade it the more willingly for their own profit, and even as a faire entrie leadeth the beholder to looke more particularly upon every part of the building: so the beholder of this worke set out under the protection of your honours vertue, will the more earnestly affect the perusing of the fame, in confidence that so much worth as is eminent in your Lordship would hinder any mans boldnesse to present unto you a trifle.\textsuperscript{14}

As Stalker pointed out, while he was leaving ecclesiastical affairs, Weemse promised that he "will avoid all questions whereby disputes might arise in the church."\textsuperscript{15} And he kept the promise in his writings. The tone of his writings is never polemic in nature, it is a positive explanation of philological study of the biblical texts and examination of Jewish customs as they relate to biblical passages. In a very few places in his theological and exegetical treatises he mentioned his opposition to certain theological views. But almost all of the polemics he made were against either the Catholics or the Jews. Stalker concludes that Weemse chose to leave church politics "as he had been wishing to do."\textsuperscript{16} He probably had an expectation that his act of seeking the patronage of Episcopalian leaders would promote the peace of the church. Though Stalker's picture of Weemse is "full of ifs and perhapses," it is probably right when one considers a rare description of Weemse's personal disposition made by the general assembly for the


\textsuperscript{15} Stalker, "John Weemse," p. 154.

occasion of his appointment—"one of the best-learned and disposed for peace of those on the side of the ministers, for maintaining unity among the brethren who were considered as tending to Episcopy." Probably the reprimand of the Archbishop provided him with the direct occasion to withdraw himself from church affairs, but his peaceful disposition among brethren might have been at least a contributing cause.

Weemse devoted the last sixteen years of his life to the advance of a better interpretation of Scripture. For Weemse, Scripture was the living Word of God speaking to the church. That living Word of God should be understood within the context of Scripture itself. Weemse made this point clear in his citation of Calvin in his Latin translation of his Christian Synagogue.

For Scripture is the school of the Holy Spirit, in which, as nothing is omitted that is both necessary and useful to know, so nothing is taught but what is expedient to know... The best limit of sobriety for us will be not only to follow God's lead always in learning but, when he sets an end to teaching, to stop trying to be wise.¹⁷

Weemse did not want to go beyond the content of text and deal with abstract subjects and questions "which doe more hurt than good to the Church... they [schoolmen] fell to much contention amongst themselves... too many disputations in effect do rent the truth."¹⁸

Without doubt, when Weemse said this, he had in mind the danger of idle questions and distinctions made by medieval theologians. He continued his admonition, "the best way

---


to come by the knowledge of the truth, is to bee conversant in the Text it selfe” and the best way to attain the knowledge of the text is “to bee acquainted with the phrase of the holy Ghost speaking in his owne language.”19 As his full title of the Christian Synagouge shows, he was absolutely convinced that the basic course of the young divine is a thorough knowledge of the Bible. By thorough knowledge of the Bible he meant basically three things: introduction to biblical hermeneutics, linguistic and philological studies, and a study of Jewish customs and tradition.

In this admonition of Weemse is found the traditional pre-critical understanding of Scripture that the post-Reformation orthodox theologians had in common with the early Church Fathers, the medieval doctors, and the Reformers. This churchly understanding of Scripture is nourished by the Renaissance humanistic idea which emphasized *ad fontes* for reading ancient texts. Weemse’s concern for the linguistic study of the Bible concurred with the general theological atmosphere of the Reformed academy of the day that drew a particular tie between theology and linguistic study. De Jonge describes the significance of textual study of the Bible in the theological curriculum of the University of Leiden in the post-Reformation period.

In traditional faculties of theology in Catholic universities such as Louvain, lectures were of two sorts, depending on their subject: either on the Bible or on dogmatic theology, which was generally taught from the Sentences of Peter Lombard or from the Summa of Thomas Aquinas. In Leiden, on the other hand, it was proposed that, besides practice in preaching and theological debate (*conciones* and *disputationes*), the course should only consist of exegetical lectures on the Old and New Testament.

---

These lectures had to be based on the Hebrew and Greek texts of the Bible. Courses in systematic theology were specifically rejected.\textsuperscript{20} Though Leiden’s theological curriculum never rejected teaching of \textit{loci communes} (common places of theology) but incorporated them within the treatment of biblical passages,\textsuperscript{21} De Jonge’s description exhibits the close tie between theology and linguistic study of Scripture.

Weemse must have acquired a certain degree of working knowledge of Hebrew in his education at St. Andrews. Though the extant record does not indicate what further education in Hebrew he received beyond his study in St. Andrews, his voluminous works reveal a clear goal for his toil. It was nothing if not an ideal education for the young divines who prepare for ministry. Weemse was pleased to dedicate his two important hermeneutical manuals of Scripture “to the Studious young Divines.” He said that “it is my hearty prayer to God that Aarons rod may still flourish, that there may bee a hopefull seed to succeed, and that the Schoole and Universities may be like the Pom-citron, that goodly tree, which beareth apples at times.”\textsuperscript{22} In another place he said, “ye must be skilfull and trained before ye enter into this calling, that being entred in it, ye may begin to turne the key of knowledge to open the Scriptures to your hearers.”\textsuperscript{23} Weemse never assumed a teaching position, but his vast knowledge of linguistic studies made his


\textsuperscript{21} Van Rooden, \textit{Theology, Biblical Scholarship}, pp. 51-54.


biblical interpretation very prolific and useful. His voluminous works were counted among the "most widely-read guides to Scripture" along with the works of William Perkins, and his *Christian Synagogue* was said to have provided "the most scholarly and systematic methodology" of the early and mid seventeenth century England.24 “Besides enjoying considerable contemporary fame, the expository works of Wemyss were praised and perhaps read by authors who flourished long after his death.”25

Most probably in recognition of Weemse’s accomplishments in biblical hermeneutics, Charles I appointed him to the prebend of the Cathedral of Durham on the fourth of May 1634.26 Weemse came to Durham and presented himself on the seventh day of June for his installation.27 He was the second of the twelve major canons of the cathedral and he held the prebendary jointly with the incumbency of Duns. Weemse was the only minister of the Church of Scotland to hold a prebendal stall in an Anglican cathedral.28 *The Chapter Act Books* of the cathedral of Durham do not record his stay there. From the fact that he received the stipend while “vacant,” it is highly probable that

---


27 *Durham Dean & Chapter Muniments*, Chapter Acts 7 June 1634, Archives and Special Collections, University Library, University of Durham.

since he was a favorite with the king, who gave him a dispensation allowing him to be absent from Durham, probably for his ministry at Duns, and still collect all his cathedral income. *The Treasure’s Books* record someone signing on receipt of Weemse’s stipend on the feast of John the Baptist, the twenty-fifth of June, 1636. For his last stipend on Michaelmas, the twenty-ninth of September the same year, it was recorded, “pro reditu ecclesiae sol.” This record suggests that he was alive then, as the Treasurer’s Books recorded the payment four times each year.  

Weemse died in November 1636 with a heavy debt.  

Weemse wrote eight books concerning biblical interpretation and preaching from the viewpoint of “the true Orthodoxe Christian Church.” Stalker is quite right when he says about Weemse’s work: “All his learning—and it was wide—was devoted to the one end of the interpretation of Holy Scripture, and that not as an end in itself, but for homiletics and instruction.” Weemse’s work can be classified in three types. The first type is a hermeneutic manual. To this group belong *Christian Synagogue*, *Exercitations Divine*, and *Observations*. These three books illustrate both principles and numerous examples of biblical interpretation. The second group is his exegetical practice of the Law—moral, judicial, and ceremonial Laws. And the third consists of his theological

---

29 *Durham Dean & Chapter Muniments, Treasurer’s Book* 25, 1633-34, folio 3v; 26, 1635-36, folio 4v, Archives and Special Collections, University Library, University of Durham.  

30 CC155/3 ff.51r-52v Testaments of John Wemyss, Scottish Record Office, The National Archives of Scotland.  

and apologetic treatises. To this belong The Portraiture and A Treatise of the Four Degenerate Sons.

2. Weemse's Sources and Antecedents

Weemse did not refer to Calvin by name, nor did he appeal to Calvin's contemporaries, notably, Vermigli, Musculus, and Zanchi. However, Weemse's principles of theology and biblical interpretation were without doubt shaped by the theology of the early Reformers as reflected and interpreted through the historical intellectual development of the late sixteenth century English Reformed theologians such as Perkins and Whitaker. His reference to the earlier Reformed tradition should be understood in two ways. First, like many other seventeenth-century authors, he looked to "Calvinists" of the decades preceding him rather than making direct reference to Calvin. Calvin's work was old by that time, yet international Calvinism in early seventeenth century Europe had a substantial continuity with Calvin and his contemporary Reformers (Bullinger, Vermigli, and Musculus) and later Reformed writers such as Ursinus, Zanchi, and Junius. Second, his work reflects the English Reformed tradition itself: Weemse knew and used the works of earlier British exegetes and Hebraists like Pilkington, Fulke,

---

Whitaker, Broughton, Ainsworth, Rainolds, Lively, and Willet. Using the best scholarly sources available in his day, he was one of the pioneers who introduced the results of Continental scholarship to British audiences and advanced biblical interpretation in the British Isles. Considering that it was in 1558 that the Hebrew tongue was first known and studied in Scotland and that a Hebrew grammar and Dictionary was first published there only in 1648, Weemse’s works on Hebrew studies and Judaica were quite remarkable for their time in Scotland.

Although there are distinct parallels in his work to Buxtorf’s *Juden Schul*, Weemse used a wide variety of sources. The list of authors he used in the *Christian Synagogue* is extensive. Weemse used various translations of Scripture such as the Geneva Bible, Jerome’s Latin translation, the Samaritan Bible, the Septuagint, a Syriac translation, and the 1575 Latin translation of Tremellius and Juni. Weemse used Buxtorf for the Hebrew Bible text, grammars of the Hebrew and Aramaic, and for

---


Hebrew customs and tradition. For dictionaries and grammar books he also used Münster, Martinius, Levita, Tremellius, Drusius, and Pagninus. For Jewish customs he appealed to the authorities of Josephus and Scaliger, among others. Weemse used most of the Church Fathers from Origen and Justin Martyr to Gregory of Nazianzus. Among them he gives high authority to Augustine and Chrysostom. Weemse freely used the Midrash, Mishna, Talmud (Babylonian and Jerusalem), and Targum (Jonathan, Onkelos, and Uzziel). For the masoretic studies he appealed to a wide range of rabbis, among them medieval rabbis, such as Maimonides and Benjamin of Tudela. He also appealed to Ibn Ezra, Aquila, David Kimchi, Salomon, and Ruffinus. Weemse heavily relied on Elias Levita’s masoretic study, especially on the nature and value of the Hebrew vowel-points in the Bible, and Jacob ben Chajim’s introduction to the Rabbinical Bible. Weemsen


regularly used *Regula Hebraorum* (the principles of Hebrew) to understand the peculiarity of Hebrew literary convention. The *Sefer Mitzwoth haggadot*, the work of Moses Cotzensis, was much used for his exegesis of the Mosaic Law. The Zohar was his direct source for Cabbalistic tradition of Judaism.\(^{39}\) He used Bellarmine, James Gordon, Morinus, Gretserus, and Valentinus as representatives of the Catholic position. Weemse knew the contemporary works of A. Rivetus, Publius Cunaeus, and H. Grotius who used rabbinic material for their exegesis.\(^{40}\) Besides these he also consulted Thomas Aquinas and Scotus among medieval scholastics. It must be noted that Weemse’s positive use of medieval scholastics such as Aquinas, often times with praise, illustrates not only the continued use of the scholastic method by Reformed orthodoxy but also its use in formulating and defending Protestant orthodox doctrines.

Among the sources, Weemse paid a tremendous compliment to Fagius and Tremellius.\(^{41}\) In the section of *Four Degenerate Sons* where Weemse discussed whether the Jews were to be tolerated in the English commonwealth, he inserted a seemingly

---

\(^{39}\) The Zohar is a collection of mystical works of Judaism which was shaped in the thirteenth century. Being a compendium of cabalistic theosophy, it was cherished by the Reformers, especially in Germany, who were offended by the medieval scholastic theology. The Zohar was transmitted to the Christian world by Reuchlin’s *De arte cabalistica*. See G. H. Box, “Hebrew Studies in the Reformation Period and After: Their Place and Influence,” in *The Legacy of Israel*, ed. Israel Abrahams, (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1953), pp. 328-32.


\(^{41}\) Weemse, *Four Degenerate Sons*, in *Works* [1636], vol. 4, p. 343; Fagius, *Sententiae vere elegantae, piae, mireque, cum ad linguam discedam, tum animum pietate excolendum utiles, veterum sapientium Hebraeorum*, Isnae, 1541; idem., *Sententiae morales Ben Syrae*, Isnae, 1541.
unrelated topic. But Weemse wished to use this as a support for his conclusion about
tolerance for the Jews in Christian society, namely that the Christian church has received
benefits from the converted Jews. Weemse knew how much the converted Jews were
hated by his own people. But Weemse recognized that their service to the Christian
church was tremendous. Capnio [John Reuchlin] was “a restorer of the Hebrew
language.”\(^{42}\) Jerome had four Jewish masters. If we Christians have received any
benefits from Jerome, “that famous translater of the bible,” Weemse argued, we should
realize how many benefits originally came from the Jewish masters. Weemse thought
that Nicholas of Lyra was a Jewish convert. John Immanuel Tremellius (1510-1580), a
Jew of Ferrara, became a Catholic at the age thirty, but afterwards a Calvinist. He
traveled from Italy to the church of England under the patronage of Cranmer. He
succeeded Paul Fagius at the teaching position of Cambridge, but seems not to have had
the Regius professorship of Hebrew there. His Latin translation of the Bible (1575),
which Weemse must have used, “exercised considerable influence on English Hebraism
in the seventeenth century.”\(^{43}\) Weemse’s praise of Fagius and Tremellius is amazing.

The Iewes say of Rabbi Moses Bar Maimon; that from Moses to Moses
there arose not such a Moses; so they say of Paulus Phagius (because he
was very skilful intheir tongue) to us christians... from Paul the Apostle
who was bred at Tarshis to Paulus Phagius there was not such a Paul; so

\(^{42}\) Weemse, *Four Degenerate Sons*, in *Works [1636]*, vol. 4, p. 303.

wee may say from Immanuel Jesu Christ to Immanuel Tremellius there arose not such an Immanuel.  

His name, said Weemse, “should smell to us as the Wine of Lebanon.”

Weemse’s use of Jewish scholarship focused on his main goal of finding the right sense of Scripture. This main goal of his biblical exegesis led him to center on its halachic tradition rather than the Cabbalist tradition. Weemse tried to find support from rabbinic literature for the Christian, literal understanding of Scripture and abhorred the Cabbalistic mystical understanding of Scripture.

Observe the forme of this writing of the Samaritans and yee shall finde it to be meere Cabbalistical, by which they would finde out the diverse readings, in framing the lines, words and letters, and setting them downe after such a curious forme, as the Cabbalists doe... that is, by the number of letters, the diverse significations of them, and the diverse situation and placing of them, they make diverse senses in the Scriptures... which curiosity the Spirit of God never used in writing the holy Scriptures.

Weemse concentrated on the philological study of Scripture with the help of, among diverse Jewish sources, rabbinic interpretation of the Hebrew Scripture, the Jewish legal system, and its ritual and ceremonies.

Weemse’s religious bias, especially his bias against the Jews, as much as the more positive elements of his work echoes the writings of Buxtorf, Perkins, Whitaker, Ames, Scaliger, Drusius, and later Lightfoot. Despite the bias, Buxtorf’s *Juden Schal* (1603) began a new tradition for a Christian understanding of Judaism in the days when there

---

44 Weemse, *Four Degenerate Sons*, in *Works* [1636], vol. 4, p. 343.

45 Weemse, *Synagogue*, in *Works* [1636], vol. 1, p. 158.

were no Latin or German translations of Jewish literature. It became a standard source for Jewish customs and was read widely for many years after Buxtorf’s death. Though Buxtorf attempted to portray the Jewish customs as “actual practice of Judaism,” his Christian bias played a big enough role that both the selection of subjects and his attitudes toward describing them considerably compromised his pledge. Thus, though Buxtorf examined many Jewish prayer books as a professional censor, some of his subtle expressions include alleged Jewish hatred toward Christians and Jewish converts to the Christian faith. Jews called Christians with the secret names “Esau” and “Edom.” Of course this was because of their rejection of Christ. Buxtorf said that “the soul of Esau passed from his body into that of Christ: and that Christ was no lesse wicked then Esau was; and that we [Christians] are no better whence ever we are not without great cause called Edomites, who put our trust and confidence in him.”

Buxtorf’s Christian bias was remarkably presented in Juden Schul in such way that Talmud was elevated to the canon for Judaism. Buxtorf’s bottom line argument is that since they made the Talmud, instead of Scripture, the principal canon of their belief and practice, Judaism is religiously invalid. The English translation of his Juden Schul stated at the end of the first chapter:

Thus hath it pleased me by way of a Preface, and for the better understanding of the things following, briefly to declare and expound the Articles of the Jewish Creed, to shew how they fell from the Word of the

47 Burnett, Christian Hebraism, p. 83.

Lord, became Apostates, and renegadoes, casting themselves headlong into that labyrinth of Errors, the Talmud, how they were miserably misled thereby, so that the Doctrine of Salvation was not at all found among them; but on the contrary, gross heresie, perversion, falsification of the Word of God, superstition, outward pride, eye-service, the great disquietness of conscience, and horrible disperation of heart.49

Buxtorf’s intention in the work was of course to portray the belief and practice of Judaism for the purpose of presenting them as a warning to the Christians and at the same time an incentive for them to develop a right understanding of Scripture. Buxtorf presented Jewish belief and Talmud in terms of the then popular polemic of the Protestant church with the Catholics. He borrowed the issues of Scripture and church tradition, which were heatedly debated between the Reformers and the Catholics and applied it to his argument against the Jews.50

3. Weemse’s Major Works in Review

Weemse’s first work, *the Christian Synagogue*, was first published in 1623,51 three years after he withdrew from ecclesiastical affairs. It was revised and corrected in the same year and republished many times separately or collected in his *Works*.52 It was translated into Latin in Leiden in 1660 with the title *Synagoga Christiana*. His major scholarship in this work dealt with the various means to attain to the right understanding


of Scripture. All of his diverse discussions of biblical interpretation, whether they were focused on linguistics, theology, or study of Jewish customs, focused on finding the proper sense of Scripture. These efforts were illustrated by the full title of his first work: *the Christian Synagogue. Wherein is contained the diverse Reading, The right Pointing, Translation, and Collation of Scripture with Scripture. With the Customs of the Hebrews and Proselytes, and of all those Nations, with whom they were conversant.* This title also indicates what broad knowledge he had in biblical linguistics and Jewish culture.

Weemse divided the book into prolegomena and three books. The prolegomena contains an introduction to biblical language and modes of divine revelation. In the first chapter of the book he used the canonical books of the Bible to show his prescribed manner of biblical interpretation. There he said that we need both “the internall light which shewes the way to come by the sense of the Scripture” and “the externall helps to come by the sense of the Scripture.” The section of the “internall light” is a rather brief reiteration of the Reformed tradition that traces back through Whitaker and Perkins to Calvin. Hermeneutical manuals of the post-Reformation period did not develop extensively the subject of the internal light in interpretation of Scripture, with the exception of John White. White developed the subject in his concept of “spiritual man.”53 Most of the authors focused on explication of theory and practice of the “external helps,” which consists of around two thirds of Weemse’s *Christian Synagogue.*

---

Weemse arranged the external helps into five different sections, with the result that they become an important foundation upon which one can expound the right sense of Scripture. They are double reading of the masoretic text and margin, right pointing of Scripture, collation of Scripture with Scripture, translation of Scripture, and knowledge of Jewish customs. After expounding these external helps, he went on in the second book to explain the sense of Scripture. Like all the other Protestant theologians, he rejected the medieval practice of *quadriga* and maintained the traditional Reformed view that the literal sense was the only sense of the Holy Spirit in the biblical text. Nonetheless, he did not interpret the literal sense as a pure grammatical or historical sense, but as a broad literal sense that was drawn from the context of prophecy and its fulfillment in the redemptive history of the Bible and in the context of type and anti-type relationship of the Old and the New Testaments.\(^{54}\) Whitaker emphasized as much the broadness of the “literal” sense as he emphasized its singleness. The literal sense “arises from the words themselves, whether they be taken strictly or figuratively.”\(^{55}\)

Weemse did not stop at expounding the right sense of Scripture, but applied the literal sense to spiritual, moral edification with a result that sometimes the application of the literal sense functioned like a spiritual meaning in the context of the church. Weemse’s discussion in the sub-sections of this book illustrates well his deep concern for

---


\(^{55}\) Whitaker, *Disputation*, pp. 404-405.
drawing doctrines out of the biblical text itself. Out of six chapters he dealt in the first chapter with “the manner how to observe Doctrine out of the Scriptures, from affirmations and negations in a Text,” and in the next “the gathering of Doctrine from the propriety or manner of speech in a Scripture.” The third book dealt with the subjects of “confirmation,” “illustration,” “application,” and “consolation” of doctrine.

In Christian Synagogue Weemse emphasized two things. One is to study Scripture in its original languages. Listen to his sincere but firm admonition to the young divines:

For to reade the Scriptures without considering the originall, is nothing but a standing in the doore, and never entering within the house; you either cannot, or else you will not. Those that cannot are to bee excused; but those that will not, let them heare what God saith in the prophecie of Hosea. Because thou hast despised knowledge, I will also dispise thee, that thou shalt bee no more priest to me.56

Weemse’s major concern for studying the Bible in its original languages is further elaborated in Exercitations Divine,57 a work parallel in content to Christian Synagogue. While the knowledge of all arts and sciences is necessary for the preacher of the Gospel, “the knowledge of the tongues is more necessary for him, because they are Vehicula scientiarum” (vehicles of the sciences). For Weemse reading Scripture in Hebrew and Greek was not exhausted by a mere grammatical reading. In fact, he taught the reader to use three types of reading. The basic type is called τεχνη, grammatical reading in


which a reader grasps letter, accents, and pronunciation. The second is ἐξηγητική, a reading to draw the “true meaning of the words, to interpret them out of one language into another, and to understand one phrase by another.” The highest level is κριτική, a reading to “censure and discern the true reading from the false as the Masoreth did who excelled in this.”

Weemse was well aware of the use of translations of Scripture. Some may be content with others’ translation. Weemse wanted his reader to have critical eyes to test “whether they have translated well or not.”

Weemse’s first major concern for the original languages of Scripture extended to his second emphasis—the employment of Judaica for Christian exegesis. Of his Christian Synagogue and Exercitations Divine it is said that they “are a perfect treasure-house of information, illustration, interpretation and commentary drawn from” the Midrash, the Mishna, and the Talmud. Weemse’s description of Jewish customs occupies the largest part among his five “helpes” for reading Scripture. It takes 143 quarto pages, while four other helps take 55 pages. Weemse was one of the pioneers who used Jewish literature for Christian biblical interpretation in England.

---


sense, he made a significant contribution to Christian exegesis in the post-Reformation period.

Need for the knowledge of Jewish culture for clearer biblical interpretation would be conceived later by Thomas Godwin, John Lightfoot, and Richard Simon. For example, Godwin in his *Moses and Aaron* (1655) echoed the words of Weemse when he said that one needs to know the customs of Moses and Aaron in order to be better acquainted with Christ and his Apostles.62 James Parkes comments on Menasseh ben Israel, an Amsterdam Rabbi, and Weemse concerning the matter of using Jewish sources for Christian exegesis of the Bible:

> For the first time in Christian history there was a feeling that revelation and the Scriptures were shared by Jews and Christians. Christians spoke of themselves as Israel in a way that did not exclude Jews from that designation; they adopted in varying degrees Old Testament practices. But what is still stranger is to find them using post-Christian Jewish interpretations of the Scriptures as historically and religiously valid.63

Weemse knew that “many worthy Divines have travelled in this subject before,” such as William Perkins, Hyperius, and Keckermann. But, he was at the same time acutely aware of the significant advance in biblical hermeneutic that was made during his day. The two major components—philological study in original languages and

62 Thomas Godwin, *Moses and Aaron: Civil and Ecclesiastical Rites, Used by the Ancient Hebrewes: Observed, and at large Opened, for the Clearing of Many Obscure Texts thorowout the Whole Scripture... Herein Likewise is Shewed What Customes the Hebrews Borrowed from Heathen People: And that Many Heathenish customes, Originally have been Unwarrantable Imitations of the Hebrewes*, London, 1655, pp. 1-2.

employment of Jewish customs—were the new “helps.” Weemse admonished his young divines, “leave the rotten Cisternes, praise the Rivers, but commend the Fountains above all. Ye have many helpes now, which your Fathers had not in former ages.”

When he said “a Dwarfe set upon the shoulders of a Giant, will see some thing which the Giant himselfe cannot see,” he had in mind a clear continuity with the earlier Reformers’ tradition, and at the same time a significant advancement from the tradition in terms of biblical interpretation.

Weemse’s vision for reading Scripture in the tradition of the Reformers is well expressed in his words.

> If the grace, efficacy, and perspicuity of this Language bee considered, it will stirre up a great delight in thee. Here yee shall not finde the stammering tongue of Moyses, nor the polluted lippes of Esay, nor Jeremy speaking as a child; but yee shall heare the Lord himself speaking; Who spake as never man spake.

Even with the new textual and philological “helps,” Weemse read Scripture in a “pre-critical” fashion, as did the early Reformers. The text of Scripture for him was the Word of the living God to the church in the present rather than an ancient text that is to be read in its historical context. It is in this pre-critical context that Weemse obtained from the

---

64 Weemse, “The Epistle to the Studious young Divines,” in Synagogue, in Works [1636], vol. 1, p. 3.

65 Weemse, “The Epistle to the Studious young Divines,” in Synagogue, in Works [1636], vol. 1, p. 4. This is probably Weemse’s citation from Bernard of Chartres: “We are like dwarfs on the shoulders of giants, so that we can see more than they, things at a great distance, not by virtue of any sharpness of sight on our part, or any physical distinction, but because we are carried high and raised up by their great size.”

66 Weemse, “The Epistle to the Studious young Divines,” in Synagogue, in Works [1636], vol. 1, p. 3.
Bible a richer and “whole” literal sense that is distinguished from the medieval *quadriga* but not totally separated from the spiritual sense.

While the *Christian Synagogue* deals with the “helps” of biblical interpretation, *Exercitations Divine* is an introduction to biblical hermeneutic, i.e., a collection of appropriate subjects for biblical hermeneutic. In its first three chapters Weemse comments on the place of arts and reason in biblical scholarship. Thus, when Weemse emphasized in the *Christian Synagogue* that linguistic studies and Jewish customs are two components of his ideal education of young divines, he did not exclude the traditional arts and sciences. Citing authorities such as Justin Martyr, Tertullian, Augustine, Chrysostom, Clement of Alexandria, and Thomas Aquinas, Weemse advised the young divines that there are three sorts of knowledge that they should master for better reading of Scripture: the school of arts, the school of grace, and the school of their vocation. “The knowledge of all Arts and Sciences is necessarie for him, as of Geometrie, Arithmeticke, Geographie, the knowledge of Physicke.” In fact, Weemse’s suggestions for biblical interpretation offer ample evidence of his vast knowledge in natural sciences such as astronomy, physics, human anatomy, mathematics, weights, and measures. His work *Observations Natural and Moral* deals with many subjects in natural science and philosophy. Among these arts and sciences, Weemse emphasized that “but
above all the knowledge of the tongues is more necessary for him, because they are

*Vehicula Scientiarum.*

Echoing currents in medieval and seventeenth-century Protestant scholasticism, Weemse argued that though the Trinity and Incarnation of Christ are sheer mysteries, the creation of the world, immortality of soul, and existence of God "may be proved by reason." He distinguished the religious verity into three groups: above reason, agreeable to reason, and contrary to reason. Weemse, however, like his contemporary Reformed theologians, believed that there is "no verity contrary to reason." Miracles in Scripture are not contrary to reason; they are above reason. Being limited in its nature, human reason cannot and does not comprehend the domain of faith. Though Weemse had a high view of human reason, he, following the long tradition of Christianity, placed sciences and arts in the position of "handmaids to Divinity."

The reason that Weemse was talking about was not an "autonomous reason," in the modern sense of reason being autonomous from any divine authority. It was rather a "tamed reason" that finds its place and function within the world of God and for the Word of God. It was a reason that was understood and used by a regenerate Christian,

---


not the reason of a natural man. After he said that the existence of God may be proved by reason, he quickly qualified it by saying that “we dispute against them [Atheists] as Divines.”

Reason in a regenerate man concludefeth not that to be false which is above her reach, but onely admireth and resteth in this great mystery; and reformed reason enlightened by the Word of God, goeth this farre on, that she beleeveth these things to be possible with God which shee cannot comprehend; but reason in a corrupt man will scorn and mocke these things which shee cannot comprehend.

In another place Weemse elaborated on the proper place of reason for the service of divinity.

First the Lord empties our soule of all naturall reason; and this heavenly gardiner makes a roome, wherein hee plants this supernaturall grace of faith by his own hand; but when he hath planted this heavenly plant faith in the soule, reason will serve for two uses; first, for the confirmation and establishing of our faith new planted; another for killing of all contrary heresies besides which might hurt our faith: But in things which are meerely divine... as the mysterie of the Trinitie and the incarnation; what can reason or philosophy doe here; but admire these hid mysteries which she can never reach unto? If reason the hand-maid have alwaies her eyes towards her mistresse, then we may make good use of her in the Church.

Rationes præcedentes minuunt fidem; sed rationes subsequentes augent fidem.

This understanding of reason in the early seventeenth century orthodox theology should illustrate the nature of scholastic method that was used by orthodox theologians. In the section “an Advertisement to the Reader for the right using of School-divinitie,” Weemse

---

70 Weemse, Four Degenerate Sons, in Works [1636], vol. 4, p. 10.

71 Weemse, Exercitations, in Works [1636], vol. 3, p. 18.

said, "Schoole divinity hath most incroched upon the truth and obscured it; framing all religion according to the platforme of Philosophie... Although this schoole divinity hath beene mightily abused, yet the abuse takes not away the use."\textsuperscript{73} The scholastic method, evidenced in Weemse's use of distinctions and syllogisms, had been already modified by the Reformers to meet the need of the Reformation principles and continued to be used by the orthodox theologians to refine the Protestant doctrines.\textsuperscript{74} Orthodox theologians, following the tradition of the Reformers, used Church Fathers and diverse available tools such as scholastic method in their academic defense of biblical doctrines.

Another important section of the \textit{Exercitations} is the doctrine of Scripture. Since this subject has been dealt with in earlier sections concerned with Hebrew vowel-points and masoretic studies, only a brief summary is necessary here. In the space of eight chapters Weemse explained the necessity of the written Word, function of the sacred penmen, divinity of Scripture, its language and style, and its vowel-points. Weemse's doctrine of Scripture is not deductively deduced from the theory of the inspiration of God in the Bible. His is rather a combination of Jesus' teaching in the New Testament and his study of the masoretic resources. In response to Catholic opponents such as Bellarmine, James Gordon, and Morinus, Weemse appealed to the authority of Augustine and various masoretic scholars such as Jacob ben Chajjm and Elias Levita. Weemse concluded that

\textsuperscript{73} Weemse, "An Advertisement to the Reader," in \textit{Portraiture}, in \textit{Works} [1636], vol. 1, p. 3; Note the similar views of the Reformed dogmatics of the era in Muller, \textit{PRRD} I, pp. 258-60.

“the Hebrew Text is not corrupted” and that “no Canonickall booke is perished.”\textsuperscript{75} A substantial continuity of the doctrine of Scripture and interpretative principles from the Reformation era encountered the changing hermeneutical situation of seventeenth century Europe\textsuperscript{76} and produced a post-Reformation orthodox doctrine of biblical interpretation. The last part of \textit{Exercitations} elaborates the subject of Scriptural translation, especially, among others, the Septuagint and the Latin Vulgate in comparison with the Hebrew original. Then he went on to discuss divisions within Scripture and the sense of Scripture.

\textit{Observations, Natvrall and Morall} is the third book of Weemse that treats the subject of biblical hermeneutic. Its full title well illustrates what he attempted to achieve in the book: \textit{Observations, Natvrall and Morall, with a Short Treatise of the Numbers, Weights, and Measures, used by the Hebrews; with the valuation of them according to the measures of the Greekes and Romans. For the clearing of Sundry places of Scripture, in which these weights and measures are set downe by way of Allusion.}\textsuperscript{77} This work of thirty-one chapters is composed of three parts: natural science, moral philosophy, and a treatise on numbers, weights, and measures. This work was designed to serve biblical interpretation by way of presenting the background knowledge of Scripture.


\textsuperscript{76} For survey of the interesting hermeneutic situation caused by philosophical and scientific development in the seventeenth century see Woodbridge, \textit{Biblical Authority}, pp. 69-118.

\textsuperscript{77} London, printed by M. Dawson for John Bellamie, 1636.
In this work Weemse attempted to either explain scientific knowledge based on his understanding of Scripture or to illustrate spiritual applications of scientific knowledge to Christian faith and practice. His point stands in continuity with the work of earlier Reformed theologians like Zanchius and Daneau who believed that Scripture contains reliable knowledge of science and philosophy.\textsuperscript{78} No doubt, science and theology were so closely intertwined that they not only did not contradict each other but also were a double source for knowing truth. Whenever they did not harmonize with each other, exegetes of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries had a simple solution. Their understanding of Scripture controlled and shaped scientific knowledge just as it controlled and shaped the use of reason. As Perkins said, "the sacred history in the order of her narrations doth every inch agree with the conuersions of the heauens."\textsuperscript{79} Scripture alone stood as the highest authority; science, like reason, was subordinated to revelation.

Weemse's description of scientific knowledge in this work reveals his knowledge and appreciation of the science of the day—a synthesis of classical philosophy with a traditional Christian concept of the universe. The universe is like a well organized living creature, existing not for itself but with the "wisdome of God." In order to show that the universe is a well organized body, Weemse was fond of quoting a verse from Wisdom 11:17 that God "made all things in weight, number, and measure." The world is


\textsuperscript{79} Perkins, \textit{Digest or Harmony of the Bookes of the Old and New}, in \textit{Works} [1609], vol. 2, p. 768.
composed of four basic elements: wind, water, earth, and fire.\textsuperscript{80} The Hebrews gathered this knowledge out of Proverbs 30:4, “Who hath ascended up into the heaven, or descended? Who hath gathered the Winds in his fist? Who hath bound all the Waters in a garment? Who hath established all the ends of the earth?” The universe maintains its equilibrium by a proper balance of forces among the four elements. Out of this harmony Pythagoras discovered “the consent of musicke.”\textsuperscript{81}

In this view, the earth is the center of God’s creation. As the center it was settled in such a way that it could not be moved. Weemse knew Copernicus, for he said that “Copernicus error is disproved, who held that the earth moved about, and that the Sunne stood still.” Nonetheless, he knew how to measure the distances between the sun, earth, and moon in eclipses of the earth.\textsuperscript{82} He also recognized that when Genesis describes the sun and the moon as great lights, it speaks of things not as the things are, but “as they appeare to our sense.” Nonetheless, he held to the Aristotelian position and appealed to Ecclesiastes 1:4-5, which he literally understood, “the earth standeth for ever, but the Sunne riseth, and goeth downe, and hasteth to the place whence it arose.”\textsuperscript{83} In the conclusion of this section, Weemse, a faithful churchman, applied the scientific truth to spiritual realm.


\textsuperscript{12} Cf. Edward Leigh, \textit{A System or Body of Divinity}, London, 1667, pp. 300-301. Note that there was no mathematics and physics to explain Copernican theory prior to Newton.

\textsuperscript{13} Weemse, \textit{Observations}, in \textit{Works [1636]}, vol. 1, pp. 11-12, 16-23.
If the earth that hangeth upon nothing, be so setled that it cannot bee
mooved, how much more is the Church setled, which is setled vpon the
rocke of Christ? In the setling of the earth, Gods power and his wisedome
are seen: but in setling of his Church, both his power and his mercy
appeare.\textsuperscript{84}

Weemse also wrestled with the question of where the soul resides in the body, a
subject that seems strange to the modern mind. After explaining the answers of the
Peripatetics, Platonists, and physicians, Weemse concluded that “the soul is in every part
of the body to animate it for naturall uses, so it should be in every part of the body to
make our members the weapons of righteousness and holinessse.”\textsuperscript{85} The section “How the
Hebrews distinguished the ages of man” compares the Hebrew method of dividing human
life with the Greek and Latin methods. The Jews divided human life into five parts:
sucking children up to age three, \textit{nagnar} up to age thirteen, \textit{ish} till the age of twenty,
\textit{bechurim} up to age sixty, and \textit{senectus} over the age sixty, which is again divided into
three. Each age group of the Hebrew human life has distinct ceremonial, judicial, and
civil responsibilities. The \textit{ish} begins to observe the Law and wear his phylactery, and the
\textit{bechurim} go to war.\textsuperscript{86}

The second type of Weemse’s work is his exegetical practice of the Law of the
Old Testament. Among the Laws, the moral law is “the guide of guides.” It was given to
all people, regardless of time and place. Thus, it is binding upon both the Jews of the Old


\textsuperscript{85} Weemse, \textit{Observations}, in \textit{Works} [1636], vol. 1, p. 68.

Testament and the Christians. The judicial law was given to the Jews only “guiding them in their policy and Common-wealth, wherefor hardnesse of their hearts, hee [God] permitted many things to them.”°87 “The Ceremonies were appointed for the Iewes untill the time of correction, and their infancy: therefore those who would apply them now to the Church, when shee is come to maturity of age, distinguish not the times aright.”°88

Weemse understood the ceremonial laws in terms of progressive revelation of God in biblical narrative. For the Christians the ceremonial law reveals the type of Christ to come. Thus, Weemse’s exegesis of the ceremonial law consists mostly of typological interpretation of the Old Testament figures, rituals, and things in the Tabernacle and the temple. Of the “place of God’s worship, A ceremoniall appendix of Commandement II,” Weemse concluded that “the Tabernacle gave place to the Temple: So both the Temple & the Tabernacle gave way to Iesus Christ, who was both the true Tabernacle and Temple, and of whom they were but types.”°89

The hermeneutical principles Weemse explained in the Christian Synagogue and Exercitations Divine found their practice in these exegeses of the Law. Quite often Weemse identified the law of God with a guide for Christian faith and practice. Indeed, his concept of the use of the law as the guide for regenerate men is clearly Calvinistic.

It may bee said perhaps, that this law seemeth not to be such a guide, seeing it is called a killing letter, and the ministration of death: but this is


°88 Weemse, Synagogue, in Works [1636], vol. 1, p. 257.

°89 Weemse, Ceremonial Laws, in Works [1636], vol. 3, p. 11.
onely accidentall to it that it is so called, when it meeteth with the perverse and corrupt nature of unregenerate man, then it is the ministration of death and a killing letter; but when it meeteth with a regenerate man, then it becommeth a guide unto him... it is a tutor to whose who begin to learne new obedience, but it becommeth a comforter and a counsellor to those who have made any progresse in holinesse... This law being such a perfect guide, and so necessary in the Church... the Law and the Gospell must not be separated. Those who would remoue and banish the law out of the Church doe as theeeves doe when they come to robbe and steale.\textsuperscript{90}

Nonetheless, Weemse’s exegesis of the Law reveals his use of vast knowledge on the masoretic text, Hebrew philology, and Hebrew custom for theological understanding of Scripture. Following the rabbinic tradition, Weemse divided Moses’ Law into three parts: moral, judicial, and ceremonial laws, and he accordingly wrote three volumes of exegesis of the Law: \textit{An Exposition of the Morall Law; An Exposition of the Ividiciall Lawes of Moses; An Exposition of the Ceremoniall Lawes of Moses}, all published in 1632.\textsuperscript{91} His explanation of the \textit{Morall Law} is again divided into two sections, the first dealing with the first table and the second with the second table of the Decalogue. Not only was the Decalogue the standard for personal and social Christian life, but it was also considered as providing a governing structure under which other laws could be organized. A seventeenth century rabbi wrote about the governing structure that the


\textsuperscript{91} Weemse, \textit{An Exposition of the Morall Law, or Ten Commandments of Almightie God; Wherein is contained an explanation of diverse Questions and Positions for the right understanding thereof. Together with an explication of these Scriptures which depend upon, or belong unto every one of the Commandments...}, London, printed by Thomas Cotes for John Bellamie, in \textit{Works} [1636], vol. 2; idem., \textit{An Exposition of the Judiciall Lawes of Moses, Plainely discovering divers of their ancient Rites and Customs. As in their Governorss, Government, Synedron, Punishments, Civill Accompts, Contracts, Marriages, Warres, and Burials. Also their Oeconomicks, (Vizt.) their dwellings, Feasting, Clothing, and Husbandrie...}, London, printed by M. Dawson for John Bellamie, in \textit{Works} [1636], vol. 3; idem., \textit{An Exposition of the Lawes of Moses, viz. Ceremonial and Judiciall. Wherein is contained an explanation of divers Questions and Positions for the right understanding of them...}, London, printed by M. Dawson for John Bellamie, in \textit{Works} [1636], vol. 3.
Decalogue provides: “if one probes the Ten Commandments carefully, he will see that there are allusions to all the 613 Commandments in them. The Ten Commandments are thus the foundation and root of all the commandments of the Torah. Each of the Ten Commandments includes a large portion of the commandments as a whole.” 92 Indeed, like many other Protestant exegetes of his day, Weemse followed the rabbis and arranged the moral, ceremonial, judicial laws under the heads of the Ten Commandments. 93

Each of Weemse’s three volumes, moreover, contains an exposition of the Decalogue. In these expositions Weemse attempted to bring moral, judicial, and ceremonial explanations under each Commandment out of linguistic studies of the biblical text and institutions and customs of the Jewish people in the Old Testament or of the later Jews. This rabbinical tradition was transmitted to Weemse through Willet, among the Christian Hebraists, who again followed Nicholas of Lyra, Ursinus, and Alanzo Tostadt through, indeed, the prime model of this type of law exegesis, Calvin. Willet says:

Yet these three, the Morall, Judiciall, and Ceremoniall, are not severally, but joynently handled by Moses: so that among the Morals there are found

---


some Ceremonials; and among the Judicials, both Morall and Ceremoniall lawes. ⁹⁴

Weemse knew that there were various traditional exegeses of the Decalogue, and indicated that “my intention especially is here to cleare these things out of the phrase of the Originall Tongues, and the custome of the people of God.” ⁹⁵ This method of expounding the Law of Moses does not mean that all the laws were reduced to the Ten Commandments but that under the headings of the Ten Commandments, which are the sum of the right worship of God, relevant precepts are arranged. Weemse handled the judicial law somewhat independently, while he dealt with the moral and ceremonial laws under the strict headings of the Ten Commandments. Some ceremonies belong to all the Commandments, while others belong to a different number of the Commandments.

Thus, in Weemse’s exegesis of the moral law, under the first Commandment are included the need of one God, internal worship of God, and prohibition of worshipping mammon. What is interesting is Weemse’s inclusion of the ceremonial law of women’s purification after childbirth under this Commandment as well as the last. The reason for this inclusion is not strange, says Weemse:

For our conception in sinne is condemned in the Commandements... therefore the negative part [of the sin] is especially condemned in the last Commandement, and the affirmative is commanded in the first Commandement, which requireth the purity of our nature, that wee may love the Lord with all our heart. ⁹⁶

---

⁹⁴ Andrew Willet, Hexapla in Exodum: That is, A Sixfold Commentary upon the Second Booke of Moses called Exodus, London, 1608, in Chap. XX., §3. The explanation of difficult questions.


⁹⁶ Weemse, Ceremonial Laws, in Works [1636], vol. 3, p. 4.
The meaning of the fourth Commandment is explained in the exposition of all three types of the law. In the Moral Law are explained the significance of Sabbath, when it began, the difference between the Sabbath and other feasts, and the sanctification of the Sabbath. In the Ceremonial Law are included the explanations of the Passover, Pentecost, the feast of Tabernacle, the New Moon, the Day of Atonement, and the Jubilee. Under the seventh Commandment are added the criminal and civil laws, and under the tenth Commandment the dietary laws.

A third category of Weemse’s work belongs to his theological and apologetic treatises. This category includes *The Portraiture of the Image of God in Man*\(^9\) and *A Treatise of the Foure Degenerate Sonnes*.\(^9\) The former work is one of biblical theology and psychology. This work discussed the subjects of the image of God in man, which is divided into two parts: “the image of God in the body and soul of man,” and “the passion of man in the concupiscible and irascible part of the soul.” This book is a good example of Weemse’s vast and broad knowledge of biblical text and arts and sciences.

It should be very clear that Weemse did not know scholasticism as a theology or theological tendency which is based on a pre-conceived philosophical system, as many

---

\(^9\) *The Portraiture of the Image of God in Man. In his three estates, of Creation, Restauration, Glorification. Digested into two parts. The first containing, the Image of God both in the Body and Soule of Man, and Immortality of both... The Second containing, the passions of man in the concupiscible and irascible part of the soule...*, London, printed by Thomas Cotes for John Bellamie, in *Works* [1636], vol. 1.

\(^9\) *A Treatise of the Foure Degenerate Sonnes, viz. The Atheist, the Idolater, the Magician, and the Jew. Wherein are handled many profitable questions concerning Atheisme, Witchcraft, Idolatry, and Judaism: and sundry places of Scripture, cleared out of the Originall Tongue*, London, printed by Thomas Cotes for John Bellamie, in *Works* [1636], vol. 4.
modern historians have suggested, but as a method which had been used for many centuries. He was well aware of the fact that scholasticism, being a method, could produce two different theological tendencies as seen in medieval Catholic theology and his Protestant orthodox theology. Following the traditional scholastic model, Weemse understood arts and science to be handmaids of divinity. After establishing this basic position of theological methodology, he proceeded to illustrate a threefold judgment of using arts and science for divinity. "The judgement of verity is onely to be found in the Scriptures, and all other writings should bee tryed by them, as the canon and touchstone."

Second, "the judgement of prudencie" is required in reading arts and sciences in order to use them properly for divinity. Third, "the judgement of charity" is requisite in order to "take that which is good, and cast away their errours." 99

It is worthwhile to see Stalker's comment on Weemse's manner of writing theological treatises.

The book [Portraiture] well illustrates Weemse's general method of treatment of Scripture subjects. It is, to set down a proposition, to establish it from Scripture, to answer, from Scripture, any objections that seem to rise against it, and then (this is usual but not invariable) to bring confirmatory proofs of it either from the Jews or the Fathers. There are few of them he does not quote. But he has the general Protestant attitude of his age, of caution, towards them. 100

This method of using Church Fathers for Protestant doctrines was popular among the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century orthodox theologians. Church Fathers were


100 Stalker, "John Weemse, " p. 159.
heavily discussed in the theological treatises of the post-Reformation period, but with serious caveats on the part of Protestant theology.

*A Treatise of the Four Degenerate Sons* (1636) was included as the fourth volume in his Works. It is an apology for the Christian faith in a negative sense. In this work Weemse attempted “to discribe those foure sonnes… that men may abhorre those vile sonnes, and learne to become Christians.” The historical background for this writing is that these four degenerate sons, i. e., atheists, magicians, idolaters, and the Jews, were growing and thus becoming a considerable danger for both church and Christian commonwealth.\(^{101}\) Weemse here cited the Church Fathers and philosophers to argue his point and lead people to Christian faith.

As an element in his apologetic Weemse discussed the spiritual status of the Jews in Christianity in terms of the threefold status of the Jews in the Kingdom of God, his Christian reasons against the Jewish opposition to Christ, and the curses laid upon them. He also here engaged in the seventeenth-century debate over whether the Jews should be allowed to stay in the English Christian commonwealth.\(^{102}\)

More than other themes of his writings Weemse’s discussion of the Jews is considerably biased by his Christian orientation: the section “Of the fearefull curses that befell the Jewes since they killed the Lord of life” offers a good example. Here Weemse

---

\(^{101}\) Weemse, The Epistle Dedicatory,” in *Four Degenerate Sons*, in *Works* [1636], vol. 4, pp. 4-5.

\(^{102}\) See further below, chapter six.
described five alleged curses that fell on Jews: curses on their souls, bodies, persons, land, and goods.\textsuperscript{103} For the curse on their soul, Weemse cited Dione: a story that they became so savage that they cruelly killed more than two hundred thousand Romans and Greeks, ate their flesh, used their skins for clothing, and gave their remains to wild beasts. For the curse on their bodies, using the authority of Calius, Weemse said that “it is holden by many that the Iewes have a loathsome and stinking smell.” For the curse on their person, Weemse claimed, using the authority of Rabbi Aaham, that while in the Babylonian captivity they cherished learned schools, but after they murdered Christ “they have no such Universities, nor Schooles of learning.”\textsuperscript{104}

\textsuperscript{103} This atrocity story comes from Dio Cassius Cocceianus, \textit{Historiarum Romanarum}, vol. 8 of this in Loeb set, Book 68, para. 32.

Chapter Three

Weemse and Christian Hebraism

Weemse's contribution to biblical hermeneutics should be appreciated against the historical backdrop of the British Isles in relation to the biblical scholarship of the European continent. This historical understanding of Weemse will show how he fits into the general framework of European Christian Hebraism, and will highlight the contribution he made to biblical interpretation within the English context. In common with his predecessors and contemporaries Weemse evinces a strong motivation for the emergence and progress of Hebrew scholarship in Christendom.

Following Loewe, we can note nine distinct motivations characteristic of this scholarship. They are humanist interest in original sources, interest in Jewish mystery, conversion of the Jews, Christian understanding of Scripture, interest in Jewish religio-political philosophy, comparative and literary study of Jewish literature, interest in *Hebraica* and *Judaica*, scientific study of Judaism, and interest in Jewish nationalism.¹ Christian study of *Hebraica* and *Judaica* during the period of Renaissance and Reformation did not proceed as a scientific study for its own sake, but for the purpose of serving Christian truth. The secular form of humanism, as developed in Italy, did not

---

exist in England where humanist learning was pursued along with the religious concern. Moreover, when humanism became associated with reform, it became the “new learning” for Christendom.²

Weemse’s acute focus on Old Testament study in the Hebrew language and *hebraica veritas* was shaped by the humanist Renaissance spirit within the larger framework of the religious demand which was keenly felt in the long history of the Reformation and Counter-Reformation. He was educated in a Scottish trilingual college which, borrowing from Erasmus, recognized the need “to reform the Church from within by a renewal of biblical theology, based on the philological study” of the Bible.³ Thus, a new framework of teaching theology by using the three classic languages—Latin, Greek, and Hebrew—encouraged the founding of trilingual colleges in the prominent cities of Europe beginning in the early part of the sixteenth century.⁴ This new academic training of young divines made a tremendous impact on later biblical scholarship.

The humanist spirit and religious demand encouraged Protestants to pursue comparative philology of the Jewish literature and history of Palestine. “While the


Renaissance, with its appeal to the sources of Christianity, highlighted the importance of Hebrew for Old Testament studies, the Reformation, with its demand for the Bible in the vernacular, emphasized it further. The Hebrew language led to the Hebraic tradition. Several historians have endeavored to document this development in English and Scottish Hebrew scholarship of the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. Most of these surveys, however, as Baroway complained, are sketchy in nature, partly because the time period they cover is so broad, and partly because there is virtually no in-depth study of a specific biblical scholar or school of scholars.

1. English Christian Hebraists before Weemse

The history of English Hebraism up to the time of Weemse has been examined in the early nineteenth century by Henry Todd and recently by Schper, Daiches, Freiday,

---


Lloyd Jones, and McKane. This section will describe the earlier part of English Hebraism to highlight the continuity and progress of early seventeenth-century Hebraism in comparison to the earlier period.

Studying the Old Testament in the Hebrew language in England began in the early part of the sixteenth century. In 1523 Robert Wakefield emphasized the study of Scripture in its original languages. After having taught Hebrew at the University of Tübingen, he went to Cambridge and became the first salaried Hebrew teacher in England. His inauguration speech at Cambridge is recorded in Oratio.

My primary aim and purpose in these public schools is to expound Hebrew literature to you, especially those parts of it which, by the singular gift and very great providence of God, express the peculiar quality, idiom and genius of the sacred language. Then, if any wish to learn Syriac... Greek, Arabic... or to discover how Hebrew, Aramaic and Arabic expositors understood the law and the prophets, and how the complete Old Testament, which provides the basis and rationale of the whole Christian religion, is written principally in Hebrew, but partly in Aramaic and Arabic, I will gladly help. Or again, if anyone wishes to study with me, not only the Mikra’ [Scriptures] but also the Mishnah... and the Hebrews torah shebe ‘al peh [the Oral Law], and which contains all the learning of the East, and is considered by the Jews “to embrace every branch of knowledge,” he may do so. Furthermore, I will help anyone who wants to study the Talmud, in which the Hebrews use words from every language, or the Targums of Onkelos and Jonathan, where there are many arcane and hidden secrets of the faith, or the Gemara, the Mechilta, the Midrash and the Qabbalah... to learn whatever secrets I have extracted from the most recondite sources of the Hebrews and from their traditions.


9 Robert Wakefield, Sacrarum literarum professoris eximii oratio de laudibus et utilitate trium linguarum Arabicae Chaldaeae et Hebraicae, atque idiomatibus hebraicis quae in uraque testamento inveniuntur (1524; repr. and tr. by G. Lloyd Jones as On the Three Languages, Binghamton: Medieval & Renaissance Texts & Studies, 1989), pp. 66-68.

Lawrence Humphrey’s works provide a good example of the second half of the sixteenth century English Christian Hebraism. He was educated at Cambridge and traveled through Basle and Zurich and to Geneva around 1558 where he joined the group which translated the Geneva Bible. He wrote Interpretatio linguarum in 1559. In this work Humphrey dealt with the definition and qualities of interpreting Scripture. He emphasized the benefits a translator might receive from linguistic studies, saying:

“Without it [study of the Hebrew language] no one is able with some praise to be involved in interpreting either the New or Old Testaments. It is full of Hebraism. The Hebrew text should be studied both day and night.”\footnote{Cited by Schper, “nemo sine ea in novo aut veteri Instrumento interpretando cum laude aliqua versari potest. Tot Hebraismis plena sunt omnia. Textus itaque Hebraicus diurna est ac nocturna manu terendus” in “Christian Hebraists,” p. 98; In a similar tone, William Alley said “Or els if any should endeavour to interpret and expund ye scriptures byeng ignorant of ye Latin, Greke and Hebrue tongues and being rude and uncunning of all antiquities, should attempt to teach the misteries of divinitie, whoch were not onely a foolish thing, but also a wicked,” cited by Schper, “Christian Hebraists.” p. 116.}
The establishment of the Regius professorship, however, did not lead to a steady progress in English Hebrew scholarship. Though there were some Hebrew professors in England in the second half of the sixteenth century, only a few of them became eminent Hebraists. Many of them knew little more than the Hebrew alphabet. Among the three languages of Latin, Greek and Hebrew, knowledge of which indicated well-educated men of the day, Hebrew was rarely used by students to communicate among themselves in the school hallway, something which was required for students.

The limits of sixteenth century English Christian Hebraism are exemplified by the church’s scornful attitude toward the post-biblical rabbinic literature. Discussing Humphrey, Schper writes the following on the general attitude of Christian Hebraists in the second half of the sixteenth century:

Hebrew is the language of Christ and the idiomatic background of Galilee is the Hebraic. The language therefore must be studied but the traditional interpretation of the Rabbis is to be ignored... Such an approach to Jewish sources greatly mars his elaborate and learned treatise on the arts and translation and interpretation. This unqualified plea for the Hebrew language as the idiom of the original text, associated with so disfavourable an attitude toward the development of its traditional interpretation, is a feature confined not alone to Humphrey, or to the sixteenth century.

The sixteenth century was a beginning stage of Christian Hebraism in the British Isles.

Most eminent English and Scottish Hebraists were educated on the continent. Though

---


English Hebraists exorted the young divines to delve into the study of the Bible in its original languages, the curriculum of the divinity school at the time was not always favorable to this proposal by biblical scholars.

Progress in English Hebrew scholarship, however, did not proceed without difficulties. Though there were some Hebraists, who learned their basic knowledge of Hebrew in the English universities, as mentioned above, the latter half of the sixteenth century was a period of stagnation in the area of general scholarship in English universities. Growing religious controversies, and deepening ecclesiastical schisms with the consequent weakening of scholarship undermined academic studies, including Hebrew study. A rivalry between science and mathematics played a large role in the decline of classical learning.\(^{15}\) Though professors were appointed at Oxford and Cambridge, many of whom were Jewish converts or from the Continent, linguistic study was used more to support one's own theological position than to promote biblical interpretation and theology in a positive sense. Hebrew study was valued chiefly for theology, and polemical arguments were dearer to most divines than philological study.\(^{16}\)

Besides this academic stagnation, fear of Judaising tendencies, which was well and alive in the church, hampered the steadfast progress of Hebrew studies. The judaizing tendency was easily paired with Hebrew language. For this very reason


Calvin's Hebrew Catechism was banned in 1578 with other books, though it was known to be the "primer" of the Hebrew language.\textsuperscript{17}

One further obstacle to Hebrew scholarship was financial; the charter for classical education was to be made with the institutions' own revenue. When an educational institutions' relationship with the church and the state was unstable in the fluctuation between the Presbyterian and Episcopalian parties, progress in Hebrew scholarship was sacrificed. This struggle was acutely felt in St. Mary's college at St. Andrews University, because it was founded under a direct ecclesiastical influence.\textsuperscript{18}

Secondly, the Hebrew curriculum was reserved only for the M. A. and B. D. degree students, which had significantly reduced the number of divinity students who actually learned Hebrew. In 1550 Oxford had only three students who could study Hebrew, and Cambridge only had a few more than Oxford.\textsuperscript{19} The 1560 statutes of Trinity College prescribed that Hebrew was to be taught only to those who obtained their M. A. degree.\textsuperscript{20} The \textit{Statutes of the Colleges of Oxford} reveals in the middle of the sixteenth


\textsuperscript{19} Schper, "Christian Hebraists," p. 255.

century that there was only very little interest in Hebrew, while Latin and Greek were studied and recommended for use even in conversation.\textsuperscript{21}

A third obstacle was the lack of competent Hebrew scholars in England, which led eventually to the use of continental reformers and refugees. Many of the continental Reformers went to England as religious refugees. Peter Martyr Vermigli (1500-1562), an Italian Reformer, was expelled from Italy as a suspected heretic and was appointed the next year as a divinity professor at Oxford. After Vermigli, a succession of refugee Hebrew teachers from the Continent established a firm understanding of Hebrew in England. Martin Bucer came to England in 1549 and taught at Cambridge as Regius professor of divinity. Bucer accompanied his friend Paul Fagius, who fled from persecution in Germany. Fagius and Bucer were appointed to make a translation of Scripture. However, it was not completed due to their sudden deaths. John Immanuel Tremellius (1510-1580), a converted Jew, came to England in the same year as Bucer and Fagius. He also went to Cambridge and taught Hebrew gratis. He and his wife eventually became free citizens in England in 1552.\textsuperscript{22}

Anthony Rodolph Chevallier came from France and assisted Tremellius at Cambridge. He also was made a free citizen. Chevallier was appointed in 1569 as a


Hebrew lecturer in Cambridge. The learned Hebraists John Drusius and Hugh Broughton were influenced by Chevallier’s teaching. Drusius came to England with his father as religious refugees. He studied both in Cambridge and Oxford and taught Hebrew and Syriac at Oxford. Another English student of Chevallier was Sir Thomas Bodley. Chevallier was succeeded by another French scholar, Philip Bignon.23

The fourth obstacle was the lack of Hebrew typography. As Jews were constantly expelled from European countries and Jewish printing was heavily regulated by the authorities, it was extremely difficult in the seventeenth century to have a Hebrew printing press. Thus, only a few printers could manage to print Hebrew works.24 The situation in England was even more difficult. Professional Hebrew printing, like that on the Continent, was not available in England in the early days of the seventeenth century. Thus, though some Hebrew type was used, it was only in scattered places. Wakefield complained in 1524 of the lack of Hebrew type-setting.25 After his inauguration speech, Oratio, the first work with some Hebrew fonts published in 1524 in London, for nearly one hundred years Hebrew typesetting was not available in the British Isles. Though Todd claimed that Hebrew types were used in Oxford, it was the general assumption that


25 Wakefield, Oratio, p. 44.
at the end of the century "not more than two lines of Hebrew could be printed, because of the want of types." It was only in 1655 that Oxford printed the first work with Hebrew type. The book was Edward Pococke’s (1604-1691) *Porta Mosis*, an edition in Latin and Arabic of Maimonides’ *Introduction to the Mishna*. It was in fact not Hebrew but Arabic in Hebrew characters. Abendana’s Latin translation of the entire Mishnah, which was accomplished around 1676 after an effort of nearly thirty years, was never printed because of the lack of sufficient Hebrew type at Cambridge.

These difficulties, however, began to fade away around the dawn of the seventeenth century. Schper summarizes the Hebrew study in the early seventeenth century England as follows:

In these forty years [from 1568 of the Bishop’s Bible to the 1611 of the Authorized Version] the essential characteristics of England in the all-embracing spheres of religion, the state and culture were subjected to the process of transformation. The Elizabethan settlement, military triumph over Spain and the unparalleled achievement in the literary world, all conspired to create that fabric of English life to be universally recognised by subsequent eras as unique in its nature. The gradual and increasing influence of humanism in its most varied forms, and its integration into the body politic of English life are reflected in its religious and social institutions, its literature and its scholarship. Prominent, too, in this accommodation of Renaissance ideas with existing English forms can be discerned the development of the ideas inherent in the return to the ‘Hebraica veritas.’ Greater concern for the Bible originals, the rise of the Puritans, the publication of the first Hebrew Grammar in the English language, the process of textual criticism, are all features of the period which acquired for Hebrew a more accurate care and greater love. The

---


times were propitious for the emergence of the scholars to crown the scholarship of the century.”

First of all, English Hebraists came to enjoy necessary Hebrew texts and grammars for reading Scripture and training young divines in Hebrew. It was typical in the early sixteenth century for Christian scholars who were interested in any Hebrew studies to have rabbis teach them. During the early seventeenth century, however, Christian Hebraists began to establish their own Hebrew studies, with exceptions and with the help of Jews like Tremellius, and to wrestle with their own Christian problems. The growing desire for Hebraica veritas of this period led many English Christian Hebraists to the linguistic and comparative study of the Bible.

Growing admiration for the Hebrew text of the Bible by Christian scholars led them to a more positive view of the rabbinic literature. Protestant theologians commonly viewed rabbinic literature, as theological treatises, to be non-Christian and for some authors even as willful corruption of the Gospel. Rabbinic literature as


30 Weemse, like other contemporary scholars, thought that Paul Fagius who made a great contribution to Christian Hebraism was a converted Jew. But both of his parents were Christians. See his biographer, Richard Raubenheimer, Paul Fagius aus Rheinzabern. Sein Leben und Wirken als Reformator und Gelehrter, Veröffentlichungen des Vereins für Pfälzische Kirchengeschichte, Bd. 6, (Grünstadt, Pfalz: Emil Sommer, 1957), pp. 12-13.


grammatical and exegetical work, however, began to be seen as the “fountain” from
which scholars could draw the right sense of the Bible. For a Puritan Hebrew scholar at
St. John’s College, William Fulke, this was a good reason to read rabbinic literature, even
with the possible danger of “Judaizing” tendency. He wrote in the last decade of the
sixteenth century:

If we followed the Jews in exposition of the scriptures against Christ, we
were not so much to be pitied as to be abhorred: but if we be content to
learn the propriety of Hebrew words of the learned rabbins, as Jerome was
glad to do of his rabbin... there is no cause why any man should pity us,
but them rather, that to cloke their ignorance in the Hebrew tongue,
pretend as if it were more unlawful to learn Hebrew of the Hebrew
rabbins, than Latin of Quintillian or Priscian, and Greek of Gaza, Suidas
and such like. 33

This positive view of Hebrew literature made such a significant progress in exegetical
scholarship at the end of the sixteenth century, that the accusation of rabbinic abuse of the
biblical text in Jewish doctrines did not prevent the Christian theologians from using the
rabbinic literature as source for a right interpretation of the Bible. Love for Hebrew
literature as a valuable source for Christian understanding of Scripture combined with a
hatred of it as a heretical treatise was widespread among Christian scholars of the day.

31 Fulke, A defence, p. 313; For Fulke’s Hebrew scholarship see Schper, “Christian Hebraists,” pp. 185-91;
Luther would have agreed with Fulke: “Das man die [hebräische] Sprache und Grammatica von jüngen [die
Judens] lernet, das ist fein und woll gethan, gleich wie sie auch thun, lernen von uns die Deutsche Sprache...
13-15; In the first quarter of the seventeenth century Ainsworth had a balanced view of the Talmud and
Aramaic paraphrases of Jonathan and Onkelos. He said about them: “when they doe well, they are the best
Expositors [of Scripture]; and when they doe evil, they are the worst... To object the liewes heresies,
fables, and false expositions of many Scriptures, is no sound reason to condemne the good things which are
found in them... yet many profitable things are found in them for the opening of the Scriptures.” in “Of the
Hebrew Records” which is appended to Annotations upon Genesis.
Two recent works delightfully show how on the continent Johannes Buxtorf, Constantijn L’Empereur, Cocceius, Amama, Fagius, and Drusius introduced Jewish literature to the Christian world of the early seventeenth century. Not only did these Christian scholars introduce Jewish literature to the Christian world, but also the wider tracts of them they transmitted. All of the different genres of Hebrew literature they transmitted, such as pedagogy, linguistics, exegesis, institutions of Israel, theology, and moral study, could be put directly at the service of Christian theology and biblical exegesis. With these introductions and translations Christian scholars could advance their biblical theology without personal and direct Jewish assistance.

Historians of English Christian Hebraism have shown that by the dawn of the seventeenth century, much of the Jewish literature on Scripture as well as the standard Bible texts had been available to the Christian Hebraists. David Daiches, one of the best historians describing the period in question, states:

By this time [the end of the sixteenth century], knowledge of Hebrew had ceased to be a rare or isolated phenomenon; most of those who wished to

---

34 Burnett, Christian Hebraism, pp. 33-34, 82-83, 101-02; Van Rooden, Theology, Biblical Theology, pp. 110-32.

write about the Bible as scholars, and even some who wrote solely as controversialists, deemed it necessary to show some acquaintance with the original language. 36

Various libraries of England such as Fetherstone in 1628, Robert Martin’s library of 1633, Richard Whitaker’s library of 1645, and Octavian Pulleyn’s library of 1657 include titles of many Hebrew, Chaldaic, and Aramaic books. 37 Among others, the most prominent sign of the growing need of Jewish literature for English Christendom is the 1647 purchase of Hebrew books by the English parliament for the library of the University of Cambridge. The record of English parliament of 1647 reads:

The sum of Five hundred Pounds [out of two thousands bestowed upon the library of the University of Cambridge] be charged upon... for buying of the said Thomason a Library or Collection of Books, in the Eastern Languages, of a very great Value, late brought out of Italy, and having been the Library of a learned Rabbi there. 38

Books listed in the first Bodleian catalogue also prove this assessment. Included in the catalogue by the end of the sixteenth century were all the possible genres of the Jewish sources: “grammars and lexicons accessible in Hebrew... separate editions of rabbinical commentaries, supercommentaries, legal codes, cabbalistic works, and Midrashic and Talmudic texts.” 39

These works were either translated into Latin from the Hebrew or written by the Jewish converts such as Reuchlin and Tremellius and intermediary Christian writers like

36 Daichi, The King James Version, p. 158.
Buxtorf, Junius, and Drusius. These introductions and translations of the Jewish sources that were dispersed throughout Europe because of the development of the printing press, made the Christian study of Hebrew Scripture possible without the help of the Jews.⁴⁰ Now, Hebrew had become essential to the understanding of the principal documents of the Christian faith.

There were seventy-eight Latin grammars of Hebrew published between 1504 and 1611, and fourteen lexicons of Hebrew by 1610. Reuchlin published two Hebrew grammars and a lexicon in 1506 and 1518. Sebastian Münster’s Latin translation of Levita became the standard grammar for centuries. Richard Brett is claimed as the writer of the first extant grammar of the Hebrew languages in Latin probably in the last years of sixteenth century England. The first Hebrew grammar written in English is credited to a Puritan scholar John Udall. His Mapteach Leshon Hakodesh was published posthumously at Leiden in 1593. It included the translation of Petrus Martinius’ Latin-Hebrew grammar, a grammatical analysis of Psalms 1, 25, and 68, and a Hebrew dictionary of biblical words.⁴¹

---


Besides many translations of Scripture published for ordinary believers in England, there were scholarly volumes of various kinds of literature for biblical scholarship. The first polyglot Bible of 1517, the Complutensian, displayed the Hebrew, Latin, Greek, and Aramaic texts. The Christian press of Daniel Bomberg published biblical texts and the classical rabbinic commentaries. The Rabbinical Bibles printed in Venice by Bomberg between 1517 and 1549 became the standard of the Hebrew Bible. The Rabbinical Bibles also provided valuable commentaries and notes on the biblical texts written by medieval rabbis. They included the three major Jewish commentators, Rashi, Ibn Ezra, and Kimchi, as well as Targum Onkelos, Targum Jonathan, Nachmanides, Jacob ben Asher, and the famous Maimonides, among others.

Joannes Mercerus collected passages from the Talmud. Nicholas of Lyra’s Postillae, published several times in the sixteenth century, was also an important source of rabbinic tradition. Fagius translated a treatise on the Mishnah and Kimchi’s commentary on the first ten Psalms. Neal translated Kimchi’s commentary on the minor Prophets. Rabbinic lore, biblical exegesis, and major Cabbalistic works were also available both in Hebrew and Latin. Even Jewish legal codes and cabbalistic literature were available in Latin.

---


Among the orthodox theologians Weemse gave the highest praise to Junius and Tremellius. Tremellius published several important Hebrew works which had a significant influence on seventeenth century Hebrew study in England. In 1567 he published a Latin translation of the Targum Jonathan on the twelve minor prophets. He wrote Aramaic and Syriac grammars and prepared a Syriac New Testament with a Latin translation. His most important work, the Latin translation of the Old Testament, was completed in cooperation with his son-in-law, Franciscus Junius, in 1579, the same year Weemse was born. This translation of the text was accompanied with a lucid introduction to each book, and careful annotations on almost every verse of the books. In this work Tremellius used his Rabbinic knowledge to explain difficult words and phrases.45

Along with Tremellius and Junius, special mention should be made of Johannes Buxtorf, the father, for important source for Weemse’s writing. Burnett notes Buxtorf’s contributions in the area of pedagogy, philology, and theology. His greatest contribution can be seen in his various philological and critical writings on Hebrew, Aramic, Chaldaic, and Yiddish languages. His vast knowledge is well illustrated by his Rabbinical Bible and Hebrew Bible concordance. He also introduced knowledge of Jewish customs to the Christian world. Thanks to his collecting, interpreting, and applying the best Jewish sources, other Christian authors could benefit from the Jewish material without any

45 Lloyd Jones, The Discovery of Hebrew, pp. 50-52.
assistance from the Jews or the difficulty of learning and reading Hebrew sources.

Burnett summarizes the contribution that Buxtorf made for Christian biblical scholarship:

"Buxtorf's critical work on his rabbinical Bible edition and Hebrew Bible concordance reflects traditional Jewish masoretic scholarship, the methods of late Renaissance humanism, and the theological needs and ideals of emerging seventeenth-century Reformed orthodoxy." 46 Masoretic scholarship and other Hebrew literature by Buxtorf provided great sources for Christian commentators who "wished to find the literal sense of many biblical passages, because the commentators were such excellent grammarians." 47

The rapidly emerging Hebrew scholarship on the Continent was applied particularly by the English translators of the Bibles—the Geneva Bible, the Bishop’s Bible, and the King James Version of 1611. The translators of these English versions of the Bible used the best available sources of the day including medieval Jewish commentaries such as Rashi, Ibn Ezra, and Kimchi, as well as the Targum and Talmud. In the period when the Authorized version was translated, such eminent Hebrew scholars as Lancelot Andrews, Edward Lively (1545-1605), Nicholas Gibbens, Hugh Broughton

---

46 Burnett, *From Christian Hebraism*, p. 201.

(1549-1612), John Rainolds, Richard Kilby, Andrew Willet (1562-1621), and Henry Ainsworth (1571-1622 or 1623) were active.48

Among the immediate English predecessors of Weemse in the early part of the seventeenth century, Lively, Willet, and Ainsworth deserve special mention. Lively was educated at Cambridge under the guidance of the famous John Drusius, and appointed a Regius professor of Hebrew in 1575 at the same university. He assumed an important role for the gathering of the forty-four translators of the King James Version. His work, *Annotationes in quinque priores ex minoribus prophetis* (London, 1587), a scholarly commentary on the minor Prophets, illustrates his competent knowledge of Hebrew and wide reading of the Hebrew literature. He used biblical texts such as the masoretic text, the Septuagint, Symmachus, Theodotion, and Vulgate; medieval Jewish commentaries of Kimchi, Rashi, and Ibn Ezra; and Reformation theologians such as Calvin, Oecolampadius, Pagninus, and Tremellius. Lively also wrote a commentary on the Hebrew Grammar of Peter Martinius and a treatise on the canonical books of the Old Testament.49

Lively’s commentary shows a scientific method rather than a dogmatic one. He cited various authors from the Rabbinic sources in a positive way in order to illumine the

---


sense of the Old Testament words and phrases. In order to illumine the proper sense of a biblical passage, he cited and compared all the biblical passages that held the same phrase and drew a conclusion.50 He even dealt with chronological knowledge, vowel-points, and accents. Lively wrote on the alleged small matters of the Hebrew accents:

How is it possible that by such kind of dealing divine scripture should be rightly understood? How shall the Iewes by such wresting of texts, bee made Christians and brought to beleeve that Christ is come? Here it may bee, some will say unto mee, you make more a doe about distinctions and pauses and pointes then is need: those are small matters and not so streightlie and preciselie to be looked into. I may give men leave to thinke as they list: but the truth is, that even these small matters of distinctions and rests [Hebrew punctuation and accent marks], are of great weight and importance to the true understanding of God his holie word: yet bee it graunted, that as finall matters they may bee neglected. Is that also a small matter to put in wordes of their owne, which the custome of the originall tongue will not beare?51

Lively is a good example of the earliest English exegetes who not only used various Hebrew sources but also studied the basic Hebrew syntax and grammar and its vowels and accents for Christian biblical exegesis. There is enough reason to call him the most outstanding Hebraist in the history of England since Wakefield.52 His interest in using the Hebrew sources and his concern for Hebrew punctuation, though limited, laid a firm foundation for later works in the seventeenth century, including the work of John Weemse.

Willet, a Puritan with a strongly Calvinistic tendency, was one of the foremost scholarly textual critics of his day. He received his education at both Cambridge and Oxford, and was a fellow of William Perkins at Christ’s College. Besides his theological treatise, *Synopsis Papismi*, he published commentaries—Hexaplas upon Genesis (1595), Exodus (1608), Daniel (1610), Romans (1611), and Leviticus (1631); and Harmonys upon I Samuel (1607) and I and II Samuel (1614). Willet’s Hexapla is a polyglot edition of biblical text containing the Hebrew text, the Septuagint, Targum, Vulgate, the Latin of Tremellius, and English translations of the Geneva and Great Bibles. Willet compared these texts with other translations such as Pagninus and Arias Montanus. The textual collation was followed by commentaries, in which he cited from the best available storehouse of his day—Pererius, Mercerus, Pagninus, Montanus, Tremellius, Pellican, and Vatablus.\(^\text{53}\)

Henry Ainsworth studied at Gonville and Caius College and became heavily involved in the Brownist sect of growing Puritanism. After fleeing the oppressing English law to Amsterdam he became a minister of a congregation and at the same time a voluminous commentator and controversialist. Working as a bookseller in Amsterdam, he had had first hand experience with Jewish savants and rabbis, an experience that compensated for the usual lack of genuine contact with the Jews in England.

---

Along with theological treatises against the Catholics, Ainsworth wrote Annotations on the five books of Moses, Psalms, and the Song of Songs which had been published between 1616 and 1639. In the volumes of his Annnotations Ainsworth exhibits the best available knowledge of the day, in an objective scientific way, in linguistic, textual, and literary studies of the Bible. He compared the Hebrew text with the Septuagint and various Aramaic paraphrases. He used rabbinic literature, especially the Rabbi Moses ben Maimon, for Christian interpretation of the Bible. He suggested two reasons for using rabbinic literature. First, they shed light on meanings of “the external practice” of judicial laws and ceremonial rites of Israel. Secondly, Ainsworth claimed that Rabbis included affirmation of the New Testament “in many words, phrases, and points of doctrine.” For instance, the day of the judgment was affirmed in certain Rabbis against the opinion of the Sadduces. Interpreting paradise for heaven, and gehenna for hell is common for all the Rabbis. And the second death as expressed in Rev. 20:8 is used in Jonathan’s Aramaic paraphrase. The same Aramaic paraphrase of Ps. 110:1 calls Christ the Word as in John 1:1.

Ainsworth is said to have, with good reasons, “great learning and his most exact observation of the proper idioms of the holy text, with every iota and tittle of which he seems to be as much acquainted as any of the Masoreths of Tiberias.”

---

54 Ainsworth, “Preface,” in Annotations upon Genesis.

One of the greatest mid-seventeenth century Christian biblical commentators in England who used Jewish sources was John Lightfoot. Lightfoot, being himself a great Hebraist, used Talmudic material systematically in his New Testament commentaries. However, Weemse, who preceded Lightfoot by thirty years, and had an equal knowledge of Hebrew scholarship, pioneered the use of Jewish sources for Christian hermeneutical and exegetical manuals in the British Isles. Weemse knew the benefits of using the Talmud and other Jewish tradition for exegesis of the New Testament passages. He was well aware that many proverbial speeches of the Talmud are cited in the Bible. Examples of such Talmudic proverbs in the New Testaments which Weemse used are Matt. 7:5 “first take the plank out of your own eye...,” Matt. 19:24 “it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle...,” and Acts 9:5 “it is hard to kick against pricks.”

The thesis that many Latin translations of Jewish writings on the Hebrew Scriptures were available for Christian Hebraists by the early years of the seventeenth century is exemplified by Weemse’s biblical scholarship. Gollancz uses Weemse as an example of those who used sophisticated Jewish cabbalistic literature and the Talmud for their Christian exegesis of the Law in the very first quarter of the seventeenth century.


58 Gollancz, “Anglo-Judaica,” p. 58;
2. Weemse and St. Andrews University

The Hebrew tongue was hardly known in Scotland in the middle of the sixteenth century. Though biblical Greek was used in theological circles earlier than Hebrew, theology in those days was articulated in the traditional Latin. Until the late sixteenth century even vernacular English was not accepted in theological circles, so that sermons preached in English were translated into Latin for publication. In 1550 the eminent Reformer John Knox admitted at the age of forty-five his ignorance of the Hebrew language, “In the Hebrew toung I confess myself ignorant; but have, as God knaweth, fervent thirst to have sum entrance thairin.”

Hebrew scholarship in Scotland began with the Row family. John Row (1526-1580), usually called “the Reformer,” was “the first man that broght the knowledge of the Hebrew tongue to Scotland, and taught some of his children to reade it, quhen they wer of foure or fyve zeirs of age.” It is worthy to note that the first school for teaching Hebrew in Scotland began with the establishment of the Protestant church.

It [the Reformation] induced the learned to study with care the original languages in which the sacred books were written; and it diffused


knowledge among the illiterate, by laying open the Scriptures, and calling upon all to examine them for themselves.⁶²

Row formed the Grammar School of Perth and taught some students along with his own son John. The school’s fame spread and many youngsters from noble families came under Row’s teaching of Hebrew, Latin, and Greek. The teaching of tres linguae at the Grammar School of Perth became a family tradition which Row’s grandson continued in 1637.⁶³

Formal study of Hebrew began in Glasgow and St. Andrews universities. After a couple of earlier attempts to reform seminary education according to Protestant principles, the year 1579, the same year Weemse was born, witnessed a significant reform of the theological curriculum of St. Andrews University. St. Andrews was the largest and most important theological school in Scotland during the Reformation period. The reform movement was carried forward by the leadership of Andrew Melville. He learned Semitic languages in Paris under the guidance of Jean Mercier and Quinquarbereus, the joint Regius professors of Hebrew and Aramaic, and then in Geneva. He came back to Scotland in 1574 and taught theological subjects and grammar for Hebrew, Chaldaic, and Syriac languages first in Glasgow and then in St. Andrews.

---


One of the major concerns of the reform movement was to lay “The New Foundation”

to offset the Jesuit seminaries of the Counter-Reformation.”

The theological college of St. Mary at St. Andrews University was chartered to have five masters to teach the Oriental languages, Law and historical books of the Old Testament, the Prophets, the New Testament in Greek and Syriac, and the commonplaces of theology. The proposed theological curriculum at St. Andrews was a very advanced model of the day according to Reformation theology.

The new course of study formed by the wisdom of the leading Scottish Humanists and Reformers came fully into operation in 1578. It was quite different from that of the old period: the years of study were reduced to half the number required by the practice of the Old Church, and scholastic subjects were dispensed with. Aristotle had been read by Protestant professors after the Reformation; we hear of the Melvilles that they were the first in Scotland to read him, as well as Xenophon and other authors, with the students in Greek. But the Bible now became the text-book; the new scheme was devoted entirely to the Bible; there was four years of hearing Bible exegesis and disputations, and the candidates then taught as bachelors for four years more, the professors lecturing in the morning, the bachelors at later hours in the day.

The proposed theological curriculum at the reformed St. Andrews was based on Calvinistic teaching.

---


66 Henry, Votita Tabella, p. 118.
He [Andrew Melville] taught learnedly and perfectly the knowledge and practice of the Hebrew, Chaldee, Syriac, and Rabbinical languages. At the same time, he elucidated with much erudition and accuracy the heads of theology, as laid down in the Institutions of John Calvin and other writings of approved divines, together with the principal books of both Testaments, and the most difficult and abstruse mysteries of revealed religion.  

This new divinity curriculum proposed to provide a humanist training for the young divines. It was a common practice for Scottish students to move to the Continent for further study. However, after the reformation of the universities of St. Andrews and Glasgow, and the erection of the theological college of Edinburgh, the trend was reversed. After this, when students left Scotland, quite often it was not to be taught, but to teach. St. Andrews became the center of linguistic studies and attracted students from Denmark, France, Belgium, Germany, and Poland. Among the continental students who went to St. Andrews was the celebrated exegete Andrew Rivet from France around 1586.  

So, what was the result of the Calvinist reform movement at St. Andrews University in relation to the humanist study of Hebrew? The reform provided some ground work for later Hebrew studies; however, the result was far from what the original proposal expected to reap. The continuous struggle between Calvinist Presbyterian leaders of St. Andrews and the English crown prevented a steady progress. The struggle between the kirk and the state caused a tremendous pressure on the college finances.  

---


Though originally chartered to have five professors in the divinity school, St. Mary’s College actually only had two in 1580. They were Andrew Melville himself, the Principal of St. Mary’s College, and his nephew James who learned Hebrew as well as some basis for sound humanist training from his uncle. Not until 1688 could St. Andrews have its first Hebrew professor. Students must have had some working knowledge of Hebrew and other cognate languages of the Bible and undergone certain linguistic studies to formulate theology. However, generally speaking, that “the medieval curriculum survived both the Revival of Learning and the Reformation without substantial change is the cardinal fact in the history of St. Andrews University.”

1621 was a watershed year for Hebrew study of Scripture in St. Andrews University. When the Episcopalian party emerged, the reform movement of Melville at St. Andrews came to an end. The same Parliament of 1621 that ratified the Five Articles of Perth repealed the 1579 reform of the theological curriculum of St. Andrews. The abrogation of the reform movement “threw education back to the state in which it was before the revival of letters.”

This explains, though indirectly, the origin and status of Weemse’s Hebrew scholarship. Considering that Weemse acquired his M. A. in 1600 from St. Andrews

---

69 Cant, The University of St. Andrews, pp. 53-54; Kerr, Scottish Education, p. 111.


University and that Melville's curriculum reform spanned from 1579 to 1621, it is safe to conclude that he was under Melville's tutelage. It is not known how exactly Weemse related to the Hebrew study of Melville and what influence he personally received from him. However, he must have learned from Melville and the other professor of Oriental languages some working knowledge of Hebrew and its cognate languages.

The reason why Weemse withdrew from ecclesiastical affairs and dedicated himself to biblical study might be drawn from the ecclesiastical situation of the period. In post-Reformation England, the university and church were so tightly related that whatever affected the church was immediately felt by the university. M'Crie's delineation of the period is interesting enough for us to ponder why Weemse might have turned away so decisively from church disputes and dedicated himself to biblical study. "It is to be lamented that the disputes in which the ministers were involved, and the hardships which many of them suffered, should have diverted them from this [Hebrew] study at a time when individuals had begun to cultivate it with enthusiasm." Weemse had involved himself heavily in ecclesiastical disputes and suffered some hardship, as was explained in Chapter Two. After the Episcopal church finally gained power in Scotland and repealed the reform movement of the divinity curriculum, Weemse

---

72 Other professors of St. Mary's College from whom Weemse must have received theological education were John Johnston, a theology professor at the college from 1593 until 1611 and Robert Howie who later became successor to Melville at the college. See *Letters of John Johnston and Robert Howie*, ed. James Kerr Cameron, (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1963), pp. xiv, xlix-1xv, lxix-lxx.

withdrew from ecclesiastical affairs and dedicated himself completely to Hebrew scholarship rather than divert his interest from the newly acquired biblical study.

Besides his education at St. Andrews University under Melville’s reformed tutelage, he must have sharpened his knowledge of Hebrew and of Jewish literature through his wide reading of the Jewish sources. This is well illustrated by the large list of Jewish literature he used for his works and indirectly by his tremendous praise for Paul Fagius and Immanuel Tremellius. Weemse had in his library diverse translations of the Bible. Among them he listed Vatablus, Arias Montanus, Pagninus, and Isiodorus Clarius as Popish translators of the Bible; Münster, Oecolampadius, and Leo Iuda among the orthodox scholars. Bibliander and Conradus Pellicanus are called *Biblia Tigurina.*

Parkes’ claim that Weemse was a “close student” of Johannes Buxtorf cannot be verified. However much he was influenced by and modeled himself after Buxtorf, which can be easily demonstrated by his works, there is no historical evidence to prove their personal relationship, either by way of personal education or correspondence. It is even less likely that he learned Hebrew from Jewish teachers, though there were a few crypto-Jews in England in his day. There is also no surviving evidence that Weemse corresponded with other Christian Hebraists within England or abroad.

---


Weemse's works are good examples of the progress of Hebrew studies. Weemse is situated between the years of rapidly emerging Hebrew scholarship of the late sixteenth century and its more critical development of the mid seventeenth century which is represented by Cappel's *Critica Sacra*. This particular situation influenced Weemse's Hebrew scholarship. He was keen to use the best available Jewish sources which extended from grammars, lexicons, dictionaries, the masoretic text and its rabbinic tradition, the Talmud and Targums, various classic rabbinical commentaries, to religious and civil customs of the Jewish nation. At the same time he selectively accepted critical notes from the masoretic margins and other treatises such as Levita's work on the Hebrew vowel-points, which became popularized later by Cappel. Weemse used all these Jewish sources to exegete orthodox Christian messages out of the Hebrew Bible.

Weemse's Hebraism was not a pure humanist enterprise in the sense that linguists pursue a study for its own sake. Indeed, humanist philological study played a significant role in reading Scripture. However, for Weemse, as for other Christian biblical scholars, philological study was pursued in order to reach a Christian understanding of Scripture. As is discussed above, Weemse scrutinized the Hebrew text and Jewish literature for a Christian understanding of Scripture. It is not hard to find examples of Weemse's dogmatic and polemical use of Jewish literature for the benefit of Christian exegesis of Scripture. As a biblical exegete for the church, he studied rabbinic literature in order to support his own orthodox Christianity and to illustrate and illuminate biblical teaching.
This dogmatic methodological approach to rabbinic literature was not new or rare, but a wide-spread phenomenon within the Christian church.\textsuperscript{76}

The Hebraism that flourished in the early seventeenth century was not the Cabbalist tradition but the halachic tradition of Jewish literature. In other words, when Christian scholars concerned themselves with Hebrew literature, they aimed at studying the legal system of Judaism, Jewish ritual and ceremonies, and its interpretation of the biblical text rather than pursuing the mystery of creation or attributes of God.\textsuperscript{77} Weemse rejected the Cabbalist formulation of the biblical text and its interpretation and advocated reading the Bible in the light of the Jewish social and political customs, Jewish rituals and religious tradition, and more than anything their Law. His exegesis of the Law, which occupies the biggest part in his exegetical work, is the basis of his interpretation of the Hebrew Bible.

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{76} Katchen, \textit{Christian Hebraists}, pp. 78-80.
\item \textsuperscript{77} Manuel, \textit{The Broken Staff}, pp. 39-40.
\end{itemize}
Chapter Four

Weemse on Scripture:
Doctrinal Orthodoxy and Problems of the Text

As textual and philological studies broadened in the later half of the sixteenth century, the humanistic study of the biblical text, once a friend of the Reformation, raised problems in the relationship between the traditional doctrines of Scripture and the result of more scientific scrutiny of the text. Thanks to the humanistic passion for reading ancient literatures in the ancient languages, scholars of the orthodox period made an extensive use of textual and philological studies of the masoretic text of the Old Testament and the Greek text of the New Testament as well as ancient translations of the Bible in Latin, Greek, Arabic, Aramaic, and Syriac. As result of their linguistic and textual studies, exegetes and theologians became immersed in variant readings of the Hebrew Bible, specifically, those generated by marginal readings of the Hebrew text, solecisms found in the text itself, and the problem of the post-canonical origin of the vowel-points and accent marks of the Hebrew Bible. These textual problems were not examined in a pure academic fashion but were the focus of doctrinal debates. Thus, what formerly was believed dogmatically in the Reformation era became problematic in the first half of the seventeenth century. The complexity of the textual problems was deepened by the problems of interpretation that were also heatedly debated within
Christian circles as well as in relation to the Jewish tradition of biblical commentary. The changed textual and hermeneutical situation in the early seventeenth century called for new scholarship in reading Scripture. The integrity of the masoretic text of the Old Testament and its exegesis could no longer be confirmed solely through a dogmatic foundation, but had to be examined and defended in terms of textual and linguistic study.¹

1. Weemse’s Doctrine of Scripture in Context: Orthodoxy and the Original Text

The Protestant orthodox insistence on using the original languages for biblical study must be understood against the background of polemics with the Catholic theologians and in a positive relation to the masoretic study. The study of the Bible in the original languages was an important subject for Protestant theologians. First of all, for the Reformers, Scripture was the ultimate authority for Christian belief and practice. The issue of the authority of Scripture was highlighted when the Catholic Council of Trent officially proclaimed the Vulgate Bible as the authentic, and therefore authoritative, version of Scripture. Whitaker expressed the Catholic position in the words of Melchior Canus, “we must not in a disputation appeal to the Hebrew or Greek copies: … in matters of faith and morals, the Latin copies are not to be corrected from the Hebrew or Greek.”² The Catholics did not condemn the Hebrew or Greek originals, but, in fact, some of them, like Bellarmine and Canus, saw many advantages in knowing the original Hebrew. They

¹ Muller, PRRD, II:418-19; Diestel, Geschichte des Alten Testaments, pp. 442-50; Lloyd Jones, The Discovery of Hebrew, pp. 150-74.

² Whitaker, Disputation, p. 111.
said that consulting the original text is beneficial in the cases when there seem to be
mistakes in translations or when there seem to be contradictions in some translations.3
Yet the real issue at stake was the locus of final authority: either in the original Hebrew
text or in the Vulgate. Whitaker went on:

our churches, on the contrary, determine that this Latin edition is very
generally and miserably corrupt, is false and not authentic; and that the
Hebrew of the old Testament, and the Greek of the new, is the sincere and
authentic scripture of God; and that, consequently, all questions are to be
determined by these originals, and versions only so far approved as they
agree with these originals.4

Within this polemical atmosphere, the textual study of Scripture did not proceed
as a pure academic discipline, but was espoused theologically within Christendom and
also laden with the emotional and theological hatred of Christians towards Jews. An
example of this complicated debate was the problem of historicity of the Hebrew vowel-
points and accent marks. Thus the Dominican Raymond Martin, himself a learned
Hebrew scholar, dogmatically claimed that the additions of the vowel-points to the
Hebrew text were “wilful corruptions and perversions introduced by the Jews into the
sacred text” so that Christians could not understand the prophecies.5 It is no wonder that
Martin’s claim anticipated later repetition in various Catholic polemics which sought to
undermine the Protestant theological foundation—sola scriptura. The discussion of the

3 Whitaker, Disputation, pp. 151-54.
4 Whitaker, Disputation, p. 111.
Exposition of the Massoretic Notes on the Hebrew Bible, or the Ancient Critical Apparatus of the Old
Testament in Hebrew, with an English Translation, and Critical and Explanatory Notes, 2nd edition, (New
late invention of the Hebrew vowel-points, laden with theological polemic, led by Catholic opponents to the assertion that since the vowel-points are not canonical with the consonants but a later addition, and since its addition corrupted the purity of Scripture, the believing community had to have a certain keeper and interpreter—the Catholic church, and a pure translation of Scripture—the Latin Vulgate.

Having faced this Roman Catholic counter-Reformation, the need for recovering and maintaining the pure form of Scripture became acute for Protestant theologians. Within this historical context it is no wonder that many able Protestant scholars gave their energies to textual and linguistic studies of the Bible. They had a double goal—on the one hand, more negatively, to prove the corruption of the Vulgate and, on the other hand, more positively, to uphold the authenticity of Scriptural books in the original languages. These two elements were regarded as a necessary step in defending Protestant theology as a whole against the Catholic accusations as well as in finding the true sense of Scripture. Walton says:

Since truly it seems to be foolish to prefer the little rivers to their sources, therefore they insist that the sources are not pure today but determined to be so corrupt that they cannot be maintained as a rule of faith. As they also insist that the controversial doctrines or versions cannot be examined through the sources. Other scholars, on the contrary, not only deny that the Latin Vulgate is authentic but they cry out with a loud voice against it as the worst of all versions. Not only do they wish that the Hebrew and Greek texts to be pure and immune from all spontaneous corruptions so that they can be held as a rule of faith and morals but also they declare that the Hebrew and Greek texts do not disagree from the autographs
themselves in the least points of punctuation, neither as a result of scribal errors nor any other causes could the slightest mistakes creep into them.  

In order for Protestant theologians to refute Catholic claims, they needed a learned scholarship in biblical textual studies. This Protestant concern for studying Scripture in its original language was alive and well in Weemse, only heightened by the advanced masoretic study of his day. While Whitaker and Perkins employed some textual study in their theological arguments against the Catholic scholars, Weemse advanced the argument with his profound study of the masoretic tradition of the Hebrew text. On the use of the original text for theological discussion, Weemse said:

> When light arose to them who sate in darkenesse and in the shadow of death, to the Protestants who lived before in Popery, they began to search the original Text and to looke into the fountaines, the Hebrew and Greeke, and they charged the adversaries to bring their proffes out of the originall Text in their disputations with them.  

In order to refute the Catholic argument for the authority of the Vulgate, Weemse formulated four pointed questions for his adversaries. The substance of the questions is based on the textual study of the Bible. The first one is as follows: "whether did the

---

6 Walton, “Prolegomena,” in *Biblia Sacra Polyglotta*, London, 1657, vii. 1. “Quia vero absurdum videtur rivulos fontibus præferre; ideo fontes non puros hodie esse, sed turbidos, & ita corruptos, ut pro regula fidei haberi non possint; nec dogmata controversa, vel versiones per eos examinari posse, affirmant. Alli e contra, non tantum Vulgatam Latinam Authenticam esse negant; sed in eam, ut omnium versionum pessissimam pleno ore declamant: nec tantum Textus Hebraicos & Graecos puros, & ab omni corruptione spontanea immunes esse volunt; ita ut pro regula fidei & morum haberi possint: sed ne in minimo apice ab ipsis Autographis discrepare, nec ex scribarum errore aliave causa, mendas levissimas in eos irepere posse, statuunt.”


Council [of Trent] make this [Vulgate] translation Authentick which was not
Authenticke before, or did they onely declare it to be Authenticke?" This question
focuses on the fact that the Vulgate was proclaimed to be authentic by the council of
Trent in 1546, but corrected many times later by Pius IV, Pius Quintus, and in 1590 by
Sixtus Quintus. It was corrected even later by Clement VIII. The repeated attempt to
correct the text indicated to Weemse that the Vulgate translation was imperfect. The
texts of Sixtus Quintus and Clement have "material differences," as witnessed by James
Gordon, a Catholic doctor at Oxford. From this Weemse then moved to the question of
the authority of the Vulgate. Some Catholics said that it had limited authority, while
others held that it had infinite authority in faith and practice. For the last question,
"whether the Church may make a new Version yet or not? or mend that which is alreadie
done?" again the Catholics were not unanimous. Some denied the possibility of
additions, Weemse pointed out, while others were open to further correction.⁹

The linguistic reasons for the authority of the original Hebrew Bible were often
strengthened by a dogmatic, and even mystical, understanding of the Hebrew language.
For Weemse, like many other Protestant scholars of the day, the Hebrew language was
the prima lingua—a holy, primordial language of mankind. It was the language with
which God spoke to the patriarchs, the angels spoke to men, and the prophets wrote in the
Old Testament. God wrote in Hebrew on the stone tablets. The Hebrew tongue, said

Weemse, must not be "a punishment of sinne, as other languages were... but the Church retained her language in purity not partaking with the rest in their presumption at Babel."\(^{10}\) This position of Weemse was not new; he followed the footsteps of preceding biblical scholars within and outside Britain such as the Buxtorfs, Franciscus Junius, Scaliger, L'Empereur, and Grotius, following the lead of Josephus and Augustine.\(^{11}\)

David Katz summarizes the general conception of the Hebrew in the early seventeenth century:

> The scholarly revival of Hebrew studies in England is well-known. But the perception of Hebrew as the language spoken by Adam in the Garden of Eden raised it to an entirely different plane. Hebrew was a tongue which stood apart from common languages, even New Testament Greek. ‘All’s heathen, but the Hebrew.’... The significance of the Hebrew language was thus far broader than its obvious position of honour as the language in which the Old Testament was written. Yet even after scholarly investigations revealed that the first man spoke Hebrew, what was most compelling about this original language was that it was the repository of the divine secrets, and that once deciphered Hebrew might provide a ready and easy way to mystical knowledge. God created the world by speaking Hebrew. The very essence of Creation was somehow locked within.\(^{12}\)

---

\(^{10}\) Weemse, *Synagogue*, in *Works* [1636], vol. 1, p. 13.


By assuming that all the languages came from the Hebrew tongue Weemse justified the use of etymology for biblical interpretation. The Hebrew language is “the Metropolis of all Languages, for all borrow of it, but it borrowes from none.” With Hebrew as the prototype of all languages, and using Scaliger as authority, Weemse classified all languages as either mother tongues or derived tongues. Thus, it is a mistake to suppose that Hebrew words are derived from Greek, as some supposed that pascha was derived from πᾶσας χρήμα, “to suffer,” or that Sabbath from σαββάτος, Bacchanari. Like many commentators and other Renaissance scholars, Weemse showed the widespread penchant for etymologies which were not free from ignorance of sound shifts and phonetic laws. Weemse even provided a diagram of derivation of all European languages from the Hebrew language in his Christian Synagogue. The conviction that the Hebrew language is the perfect, pure archetype of all human languages was important for the Protestant cause and, thus, was pervasive among Protestant thinkers.

Weemse’s doctrine of Scripture stood in uncompromising continuity with the orthodox Reformed theology of his time. The terms he used in his book Exercitations

---

13 Weemse, Synagogue, in Works [1636], vol. 1, p. 14; A caution is mentioned for using etymology for interpretation because words do not always signify the same thing, but bear sense according to use and custom in Henry Lukin, An Introduction to the Holy Scripture, London, 1669, p. 34.

14 Weemse, Synagogue, in Works [1636], vol. 1, p. 16.


Divine such as “penmen of the Spirit,” “secretaries of the Holy Ghost,” or “mouth of God” and his theory of biblical inspiration bore witness to his Calvinistic heritage. The holy men of God were inspired by God and enlightened by his Spirit in their recording of the revealed Word of God. Weemse was sensitive in his explanation of diverse modes of the Spirit’s guidance depending on different genres of the biblical literature.

First, they were illuminate antecedenter: when the Lord revealed things to come to his Prophets, and made them to write his prophesies; then their tongue, was the pen of a swift writer, Psalm 45.1. that is, he not onely indicted these prophesies unto them; but also ruled them so, and guided them in writing... Secondly, he inspired them in writing the Histories and Acts, after another manner per concomitantiam: for that which was done already, hee assisted them so in writing it downe; that they were able to discerne the relations which they had from others, to be true... Thirdly, he assisted them in writing subsequenter; the holy Ghost revealed things to the Prophets long before; but when they were to write these things, the Spirit of the Lord brought the same things to their memorie again.17

That the holy writers were the mouth of God did not mean that they were either “Blockes or Stones.” “As they say in the Schooles,” said Weemse, God “inclined their wills freely to write.”18 On the other hand, though they had liberty, the liberty was not a total freedom. “They might not leave that subject which they were called to write, and write any other thing, as they pleased; they were necessitated onely to write that, although they wrote it freely.”19 After Weemse emphasized so much the Lord’s perfect guidance of his scribes, as if that was still not enough, he added an orthodox conclusion, saying “it was

17 Weemse, Exercitations, in Works [1636], vol. 3, pp. 72-73.
18 Weemse, Exercitations, in Works [1636], vol. 3, p. 73.
19 Weemse, Exercitations, in Works [1636], vol. 3, pp. 73-74.
not they who wrote, but the Spirit of the Lord in them.”  

Weemse believed that this orthodoxy on the doctrine of Scripture was proved by a series of testimonies drawn from Scripture itself. In the section called “Arguments proving the Scripture to bee Divine,” Weemse specified, following the traditional Reformed doctrine, the antiquity of Scripture, the holy matters it deals with, its revelation of all things necessary for our salvation, the evidence it bears of the true God, its heavenly order and clear manner of speech, and the perfect harmony among its books.  

Weemse took this generally dogmatic line of thought from the earlier Reformed theologians of England and various parts of Europe. Whitaker offers a clear precedent: he argues that all Scripture is inspired by God; the holy writers were dictated to by the Holy Spirit. Consequently, they could not be deceived “in any respect.” On Matthew 27, Whitaker did not allow what Erasmus thought, namely that, Matthew, out of forgetfulness, put the name of Jeremiah instead of Zechariah. In Acts 7:16 Stephen says that Abraham purchased a sepulchre from the sons of Emmor, whereas in Genesis it says that the purchase was by Jacob, not by Abraham. In this case, Whitaker contends that Luke faithfully recorded what Stephen said, thus he could not be mistaken. By this Whitaker does not imply Stephen’s mistake, for Stephen himself was also claimed to be speaking by the Holy Spirit in Acts 6:10. Since both Luke and Stephen were inspired by the Holy Spirit, says Whitaker, in a somewhat awkward argument, there could be no error  

---

20 Weemse, Exercitations, in Works [1636], vol. 3, p. 76.  

in recording the incident of purchasing the sepulchre. In conclusion, Whitaker argues that "therefore we must maintain intact the authority of scripture in such a sense as not to allow that anything therein delivered otherwise than the most perfect truth required."²² This deductive method of arguing for the perfect integrity of Scripture, based on the theory of inspiration, was shared by many orthodox scholars.²³

While many theologians from the late sixteenth to the early seventeenth centuries argued for the purity of Scripture on dogmatic grounds, Weemse began to use masoretic study for the same orthodox doctrine, following the lead of Lively, Willet, and Ainsworth.²⁴ After Weemse set out the traditional dogmatic doctrine, he proceeded to relate it to biblical philology. In doing so, he attempted to enrich the doctrine with biblical evidence and at the same time explain the extent of the Spirit’s guidance in writing the Bible, which in turn would alleviate the problem of some difficult passages of the Bible. The important subjects of his philological study are the comparative study of diverse languages in which Scripture was written, the diverse styles of Scripture, and the text of the masoretic Hebrew Bible.

²¹ Whitaker, A Disputation, pp. 37-38, 279-80, 294-95, 307-308, 363; Cf. the various explanations noted in Muller, PRRD, II:441.

²² Broughton, "Epistle to the Nobility," in Works [1662], p. 560; Perkins, The Probleme or Position, in Works [1609], vol. 2, pp. 579-82; Ainsworth, "An Advertisement" in Annotations upon Genesis; For L’Empereur see van Roojen, Theology, Biblical Scholarship, p. 139.

²³ For the dogmatic arguments of various Reformed orthodox theologians for the purity of Scripture see Muller, PRRD, II, p. chs. 4 and 6; John F. Robinson, "The Doctrine of Holy Scripture in Seventeenth Century Reformed Theology," Ph. D. diss. Université de Strasbourg, 1971, pp. 103-05; For a similar textual studies of Weemse see Lukin, Introduction, pp. 118-36. In this section Lukin illustrated the New Testament authors’ manner of citation from Old Testament passages, examination of proper and improper senses of words, analogy of faith, nature of things under consideration, and circumstance of the passage.
One of the important subjects tied to the integrity of Scripture was the
difficulty in explaining some allegedly corrupt passages of the Hebrew Bible. Since the
Bible was believed to be pure and perfect, some Christian polemicists attributed the
alleged problem in the text to the deliberate corruption by the Jews. This problem was
really pertinent to the historic situation of the issue, not only for the polemics between
Protestants and Catholics but also for the Christian hatred toward the Jews. When the
Protestants began to use the arguments that were drawn from the original Hebrew, the
Catholics bounced back by using the already existing hatred toward the Jews. Weemse
explained the Catholic position in the words of James Gordon. Gordon, following the
line of Raymond Martin, said that the Jews, the enemy of Christ, willfully corrupted the
Hebrew text so that the Gentiles could not understand their alleged sense of the
Scriptures. But the Vulgate, having been translated by Jerome from the original before it
was corrupted, was saved from corruption.25

The Protestants were divided in answering this Catholic assault. Broughton, for
example, joined that usual attack on the Jews for deliberate corruption of the text of the
Hebrew Bible. At the same time, however, he not only claimed the perfection of the
Hebrew text and the divine origin of the Hebrew points but also used much of Jewish
literature for a Christian understanding of Scripture.26 Weemse held to a more consistent


26 Broughton, “An Epistle to the learned Nobility of England,” in Works [1662], pp. 557-75; Daiches, The
King James Version, pp. 156-57.
position. He maintained the purity of the Hebrew text through an appeal to the
teachings of the Church Fathers and the Jewish tradition of the synagogue. Using
Augustine’s words that the Jews are “Capsarios nostros,” Weemse emphasized that the
Jews were faithful keepers of the Bible.\textsuperscript{27} In another place Weemse made it very clear
that it was by God’s special providence that we have the perfect, uncorrupted text of the
Old Testament preserved by the Jews.

These masters of the great Synagogue, whom the Mazorits afterwards
followed, did sundry things for the preservation of the Text. First, they
numbred the letters, secondly, the words, thirdly, the verses of the whole
Bible, fourthly, corrections of the Orthography in the Margent; for they
set downe two letters, keri velo cetib, that is, \textit{we are to follow the reading,
and not as it is written.} And cetib velo keri,\ldots \textit{It is written, and not read:}
last, they sealed the Canon. The Mazorites they called them \ldots \textit{The hedge
of the Scripture:} for as the hedge keepes out the theefe; so doth the
correction of the Mazorites keepe out the rest of the Correctors, that they
should not bee bold to correct any thing in the Text.\textsuperscript{28}

One place which was frequently identified by the Catholics as example of
significant corruption of the Hebrew text was Psalm 22:16.\textsuperscript{29} It reads \textit{יְנִשָּׁב} (they pierced
or dug) in some texts, but most of the Hebrew texts, especially the Hebrew Bibles that
were found and used in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, read \textit{יְנִשָּׁב} (like the lion).

Being a Messianic prophecy in the Old Testament, textual integrity and its interpretation

\textsuperscript{27} Weemse, \textit{Exercitations}, in \textit{Works} [1636], vol. 3, p. 110.

\textsuperscript{28} Weemse, \textit{Synagogue}, in \textit{Works} [1636], vol. 1, pp. 36-37; For similar arguments see Lightfoot, \textit{Parergon
concerning the Fall of Jerusalem, and the condition of the Jews in that land after}, in \textit{Works} [1822], vol. 3,
pp. 405-08; Francis Turretin, \textit{Institutes of Elenctic Theology} (1679, repr. tr. George Musgrave Giger, ed.

\textsuperscript{29} This text is one of the five suggested texts by Bellarmine to argue that the Hebrew original is not
absolutely pure. The other four are Isaiah 9:6, Jeremiah 23:6, Psalms 19:5, and the second chapter of
Exodus. Whitaker, \textit{Disputation}, pp. 158-60; For
were theologically important for Christians. Both Protestants and Catholics followed
the former reading as the right reading, but they could not figure out textually or
philologically why it was the right reading. Calvin and Whitaker knew that the existing
Hebrew texts read רַעַש instead of רַעַש, but still affirmed the purity of the original text.
Calvin attributed the seeming mistake to the corruption made by the Jewish scribes.  
Weemse recognized that this text was alleged to be a significant corruption of the Hebrew
text, but acknowledged this problem as a matter of variant reading of the masoretic Bible.
In other words, while the line reading of the text is intact, its marginal reading provides
proper understanding of the text. Thus, this textual problem could be explained as a
scribal mistake. Weemse followed this orthodox opinion with the help of the masoretic
study of ben Chajim and Levita.  

Another example of Weemse’s textual study is his remark on the question as to
whether Matthew 27:9-10 is cited from Jeremiah or Zechariah. Weemse resolved the
problem by saying that it was the “manner of the new Testament to make up one
testimonie of two cited out of the old Testament.” And he cited examples of such
literary traditions. I Peter 2:7-8 is made up of two citations from the Old Testament,
Psalm 118:22 and Isaiah 8:14. So are Christ’s words in Matthew 21:5. While it is

30 Whitaker, A Disputation, p. 159; Calvin, Commentary on the Psalms, 22:16.
31 Weemse, Synagogue, in Works [1636], vol. 1, pp. 45-46; Jacob ben Chajim, Introduction, p. 67; Levita,
Masoreth, p. 137; For discussion of this text and other allegedly corrupt texts see Muller, PRRD, II:437-46.
written that this text is the fulfillment of a single prophet, both Isaiah 62:11 and
Zechariah 9:9 allude to it. In the same chapter Christ said “my house will be called a
house of prayer, but you are making it a den of robbers.” This is a combination of Isaiah
56:7 and Jeremiah 7:11. Similarly, Mark 1:2-3 is a combined citation of Malachi 3:1 and
Isaiah 40:3, but only Isaiah is mentioned.33

If it was the Jewish custom to make one citation out of two, why is Jeremiah
mentioned instead of Zechariah in Matthew 27? According to Weemse, the Matthean
context talks about the field. Now as Zechariah says nothing about the field, “it had not
beene pertinent for the Evangelist to have brought in the testimony of Zachary here.” But
Jeremiah’s words have a mysterious analogy in that the field Jeremiah bought was “a
type of the Potters field.” The field in Matthew was bought to be a burial ground for
strangers. This field was similar to Jeremiah’s field in that Jeremiah bought the field
when the Chaldean attack was at hand, and therefore the field was likely to be used for
the Chaldeans, the strangers. The analogy is buttressed by Lamentations 5:2 which reads
“our inheritance is turned to strangers, our house to Aliens.” Another analogy between
Jeremiah’s text and the Matthean text is found, said Weemse, in the word “earthen pot.”
While the contract document of land purchase was to be stored in an earthen pot in
Jeremiah, the field in Matthew is called the “potter’s field.”34

34 Weemse, Judicial Laws, in Works [1636], vol. 3, pp. 115-16.
In order to maintain the integrity and authority of the Hebrew Bible, the Protestant orthodox had to maintain a theologically proper balance between the historical analysis of the masoretic tradition and the Jewish theological orientation. It is in this area where Weemse exerted a tremendous effort to illustrate his basic position toward the Jews: they are faithful keepers of the Bible, but bad interpreters of it. Since the subject of interpretation will be dealt with in a later part of this dissertation, it suffices here to emphasize that Weemse was so strongly convinced of the purity of Scripture because of his study of the masoretic text and rabbinic tradition. "The Masoreth is the hedge to the Law. By great paines and wonderfull care those Masoreth, numbered the letters and words of the Scripture, that none of them might perish... the studie of the Masoreth was Cum conservatione legis, for the preserving of the Law from corruption." But Weemse did not intend to give full credit to the Jewish tradition; it was the "Providence of God," for it was the Lord who "made the Mazorites the instruments, to keep the reading uncorrupt." 

One important question concerning the purity of the Hebrew text was the nature of the keri and its textual value in relationship to the kethiv. The kethiv is what is written

---

15 Weemse, *Exercitations*, in *Works* [1636], vol. 3, p. 129; For similar arguments see Fulke, *A Defence*, p. 55; Ainsworth in his "Advertisement," appended to *Annotations upon Genesis*, illustrates the Jewish rule for copying the Law, preserved by Maimony, "if the booke of the Law doe want but a letter; or, if it have but one letter more than it should; or, if one letter touch another; or, if the forme of any letter be so corrupted that it cannot be read; it is a booke which Children may learne on, but it may not be read publiquely"; Whitaker, *Disputation*, pp. 159-62; Walton, "Prolegomena" in *Biblia Sacra Polyglotta*, vii. 1, 3.

16 Weemse, *Synagogue*, in *Works* [1636], vol. 1, p. 75.
in the body of the text, while the keri is the actual reading set down in the margin, differing from the words in the text. Since they are different, it was true that while some follow the line reading, others follow the margin, and still others put both in translation. There are more than 800 places in the Hebrew Bible which have marginal reading. The kethiv velo keri means the masoretic textual phenomenon indicating that words are written in one way but should be read in another way. The keri velo kethiv means that some words are read without being written in the text. This knowledge of the masoretic text offended some orthodox scholars who had put their faith in the literal understanding of the integrity of Scripture.

Weemse summarized the masoretic scholarship up to his time concerning the nature of the keri and its relationship to the kethiv.

Because the Text wanted the Vowels before the Masorets time, hence arose these diverse readings marginall and Textuall; here wee must take heed of two errores. The first is of those who hold, that both the Textuall and Marginall were from the beginning, and both authentick and originall from Moses. The second error which we must shunne, is this, that the marginall reading implyeth some corruption, where as it serveth for illustration of the Text.  

Weemse was aware of the fact that in the rabbinic tradition there were diverse opinions on the nature of the keri. The first erroneous position according to Weemse was developed by Jacob ben Chajim. Jacob ben Chajim said in the Introduction to the Rabbinc Bible that all the masoretic statements including the kethiv velo keri, the keri velo kethiv, and removal of the waw are found in the original writings of Moses from the

---

beginning. In this view, both line and marginal readings are the "laws of Moses from Mount Sinai."38 The second error lies in the writings of Kimchi, Ephodi, and Don Abravanel who taught that the Hebrew text was tainted during the captivity in Babylon. Whenever the codifiers of the text were not sure of the meaning of a passage or found doubtful places in the process of copying, they said, the codifiers put down the words in question in the text but did not include its punctuation marks, or wrote the words in the margin and left the text blank.39 According to the orthodox scholars, this latter opinion could easily lead to the conclusion that marginal notes are human critical conjectures and could further imply corruption of the text, and thus was rejected.

There was a third opinion among the Rabbis on the nature of keri. Elias Levi, also rejecting both of the previously mentioned positions, suggested that the keri was added by Ezra and the men of the Great Synagogue as an explanation of the difficult passages of the Hebrew text.

Our teacher Moses... delivered them to Joshua, Joshua to the sages, the sages to the prophets, &c., &c., who put it down in the margin, as the Keri has it, and that Ezra was the writer thereof... The same thing they did with all the words in the Prophets and Hagiographa, respecting which they had a tradition from the Prophets and the sages, delivered from mouth to mouth, that they are not to be read as they are written... Whenever, therefore, they [the men of the Great Synagogue] found a word in them which appeared to them not in harmony with the design of the context, and the simple meaning of the passage, the author gave them the reason why

38 Jacob ben Chajim, The introduction to the Rabbinc Bible, pp. 48-57; For similar views see Ainsworth, who published one of the best treatises on the nature of keri in "Advertisement" in Annotations upon Genesis; Broughton, "An Epistle to the Nobility of England," in Works [1662], pp. 557-60; Godwin, Moses and Aaron, p. 252.

he had written in so abnormal a manner; hereupon they wrote the normal expression in the margin as the *Keri.*

“As a rule,” Levita said, “most of the remarks of the Masoretes relate to the words and things which are liable to be mistaken.” Since they are explanatory apparatus, “nothing new whatsoever was added by the men of the Great Synagogue out of their own understanding” to the text. Orthodox scholars followed either the first or the third position of the Rabbis, for both positions defended their traditional doctrine that Scripture had been preserved as the pure Word of God, but at the same time did not impair the textual value of the *keri.* These two positions also agreed on the authority of the *keri,* though they differed as to its origin. While Ainsworth and Broughton followed the first position, Weemse and Walton held to the position of Levita.

Though the marginal reading did not originate with Moses, but was added by Ezra and the men of the Great Synagogue, Weemse believed that it had the same authority with the textual reading. The divine authority of the marginal reading was clearly illustrated by the fact that many of the marginal readings of the Hebrew text were cited as textual reading in the New Testament. The Holy Spirit guided the holy writers in their use of the marginal readings of the Hebrew Bible, and Christ, in Matt. 5:18, vindicated the New Testament as well as the Old as the uncorrupt Word of God. Since the line and marginal reading are of the same authority from God, the marginal reading, according to Weemse, does not contradict the line reading, but constitutes a “diverse reading” to the

---

40 Levita, *Massoreth Ha-Massoreth,* p. 111.

line reading. This "diverse reading" explains the difficulty imbedded in the text and, therefore, eventually helps the reader to reach the right understanding of the text."\textsuperscript{42} The text reading and the marginal reading constitute a "double reading" which, Weemse thought, should be examined as the first "help" for reaching the right interpretation of Scripture in his hermeneutic manual. Thus, he defined the function of the \textit{keri} to be either a key to the right sense of the Holy Spirit, when the Spirit made the marginal reading of the Old Testament a line reading in the New, or, at least, an illustration for the meaning of the text, when the Holy Spirit did not approve it but when it is not contrary to the text. When the marginal reading contradicts the text, it should be "altogether rejected and cast off," but Weemse did not think that this was the case of the double reading of the Hebrew text.\textsuperscript{43}

Broughton elaborated further on the nature and function of the \textit{keri}. He said:

The word of the text and margent expound one the other... Thus for civility or facility in sense, the margent reading is given with equall authority as the other: Moreover, whereas the Prophets deep skill, that omits the particle \textit{Vau}, that is \textit{And}, in a speech of two members, or hath a word too sharp for the common sort, in orthography strange, and differs in a letter from the usall manner, the margent having the usall sheweth what care the holy Synagogue had, that no one syllable should amaze the simple, but were all taught from God to couple diligence with easie sense.\textsuperscript{44}

\begin{footnotes}
\end{footnotes}
The marginal reading is a masoretic “table of direction” to explain why some sections of the Hebrew text were written with such “strangeness.” Without the explanatory apparatus, simple-minded people would rashly conclude that Scripture is corrupted. Thus, said Broughton, when we face such strange sections as where Ahaz was recorded the king of Israel and Josaphat the king of Israel or where Abraham was put instead of Jacob, we should consult the masoretic notes in order to have a right understanding of the text. For the Hebrew Bible was written, by the work of the Holy Spirit, in the “most learned speeches” with “great reason.” In other words, one should consult the Hebrew literary convention which was faithfully preserved in the tradition of the Synagogue in order to reach the right understanding of the Hebrew Bible.\(^{45}\) II Chronicles frequently put Israel in the place of Judah when it recorded the kings of Judah. Weemse explained the reason why the holy scribes wrote this way—“because he [the king of Judah] imitated the wicked kings of Israel in their wickednesse.”\(^{46}\)

The position of Levita concerning the nature of the *keri* and the integrity of Scripture was accepted by most scholars of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, such as Drusius, Piscator, and Buxtorf. Brian Walton in his prolegomena of the *London Polyglot Bible* followed the footsteps of Levita, Broughton, and Weemse. Walton said that the *keri* and the *ketiv* and the removal of the waw are various readings that were collected by the masoretic scholars from diverse copies of the text, not as critical

---

\(^{45}\) Broughton, “An Epistle to the Nobility of England,” in *Works* [1662], pp. 559-60.

judgment of the masoretes. He tried very hard in his Considerator to prove the
difference between various readings and corruptions. He did so in order to answer Owen
who understood his critical evaluation of masoretic scholarship to be identical with that
of Cappellus, namely, an evaluation that implied that the Hebrew text contained
corruption by way of critical conjectures of the Rabbis. It is worth quoting the words of
Walton as a representative conclusion of the Protestant orthodox position towards
Scripture in the middle of the seventeenth century:

The Prolegomena [of the London Polyglot] do not affirm the Original
Texts to be corrupt, but to be pure and authentic, of supreme authority, the
rule of faith and life, and of all Translations. The Various Readings of the
Original Texts do not infer the corrupting of the Text, but may well stand
with the purity and authority thereof.

Weemse accordingly reflected on masoretic marginal changes of biblical words
for the sake of modesty. Weemse was aware that the masoretic margin of Deuteronomy
28:30 reads יִבְרֵי while the text has יִבְרַי. This case was examined in Jacob ben Chajim’s

47 Walton, “Prolegomena,” viii. 25, in Biblia Sacra Polyglotta, “Secondly, if we accept יִבְרַי and יִבְרֵי as I
agree with professor Amama as I cited previously, I judge that the rest of the reading have come from
collation of different codices. For since they have not dared to change the reading in the text, since they
were drawn from the antiquity of the text, they noted in the margin the reading of other texts that they judge
more true, placing punctuation marks under the reading of the text, so that in this way, they could warn the
readers that the marginal reading ought to be read,” “Secundo, reliquas lectiones (si excipiantur יִבְרַי &
יִבְרֵי) existimo cum S. Amama loco citato, fuisse ex codicum discrepantium collatione. Cum enim
lectionem in textu, codicum antiquitate & reverentia ducti, non ausi sint mutare; lectionem aliorum
codicum, quam veriorem judicabant, in margine annotarunt, punctis vocis marginalis sub voce textuali
adhibitis: ut hoc modo monerent, vocem marginalem legendam esse.”

48 Brian Walton, The Considerator Considered, first published in 1659, repr., by Henry John Todd as the
pp. 101-17.

49 Walton, Considerator, p. 160.

introduction to the Rabbinic Bible. There a citation from Rashi explained why the masoretic scholars changed the word in the margin. It was because the word יֵבָשָׁה was used for ‘illegitimate cohabitation like that of dogs,’” while יֵבָשָׁו denoted “cohabitation of people who are legally married.”  

Weemse followed the tradition of the Talmud as expressed by Jacob ben Chajim who said that “our sages submit, all the verses wherein are written indecent expressions, decent expressions are read in their stead.” An intriguing question arose out of the change of the words in the masoretic note—if indecent words in Scripture should be read in a more decent expression, does the Talmudic tradition suggest impurity in the Hebrew Scripture? Weemse answered:

> When the holy Scriptures were written, these words were comely and modest, and gave no offence to the hearer, but the corruption of man is growne since; and many words are so degenerate, that chaste eares cannot heare them without offence; many words are degenerate now, which in our fathers time sounded well enough.

What is corrupt is not the words in Scripture, said Weemse, but the hearer’s mind which understands the words. According to Weemse, the masoretic margins do not correct the abnormal or erroneous expressions of the biblical text, but only illustrate the seemingly strange expression with more natural and clearer terms. It is something like, as in the Jewish saying, putting crooked shoes on crooked feet. The problems of the strangeness, to the modern ears, of some passages of the Hebrew text, Weemse thought, would be

---

resolved with a proper examination of the philological study of the text in the tradition of the Hebrew literary convention.

The problem of modest language in the marginal reading, however, was not so simple and could not always be understood as accommodation to human hearers. For in another place, where Weemse seemed to find that the marginal reading "changes" the textual reading, he rejected the marginal reading. Regarding the cases of "change" he said:

The Mazorites of Tyberias will seemse to be more modest then the Text, and to put the holy Ghost to schoole as it were, to teach him to speake... but, to the cleane, all things are cleane, Tit.1.11... As they would shew themselves forsooth more modest then Pen-men of the holy Ghost: so they would shew themselves more element then the holy Ghost. 54

In these cases of change or addition, Weemse rejected the authority of the marginal reading, but maintained the purity of the text.

While Weemse defends the integrity and purity of the Hebrew Scripture by understanding the keri as explanatory annotations of the text, Walton argues for the same doctrine with a slightly different conception of the keri. Walton argues that the modest expressions in the marginal reading were not added by the Masoretes because of their critical judgment, but were a result of the collation of varying codices.

It is still questionable whether they collected these notes from varying codices or whether they corrected the textual readings from their own judgments and critical analysis; and it is questionable whether they placed in the margin that reading which they judge to be the better one. This distinction must be preserved. For, first of all, there are certain rather

---

54 Weemse, Synagogue, in Works [1636], vol. 1, p. 46.
obscene expressions which they have warned against through more modest expressions in the margin under the symbol ɭ. It is obvious that these expressions are not differences from the text, but they come from the boldness and superstitions of the Rabbis for the holy men who would never have written expressions which they did not want to be read nor would they have substituted other expressions in place of these in the text. For if these expressions offend the ears when they are read, why would not they offend the eyes of the one who reads them also, since ugly things can be presented just as much through the eyes as through the ears?55

Both Weemse and Walton deny the understanding of the marginal reading to be conjectures or critical amendments of the mistaken expression of the textual reading, the understanding that was usually known as the critical judgment of the Masoretes. The marginal reading came to be understood either as an explanation of the Hebrew literary convention, as Weemse understood it, or as a collation of the variant codices of the Hebrew texts, as Walton understood it. Both agreed that the textual problems of the Hebrew text do not harm the integrity of the Hebrew text.

This manner of understanding the alleged “change” or “defect” was shared by other orthodox Reformed scholars. Before Weemse, Ainsworth said in his preface to The Annotations upon Genesis that “the change of names, words, and letters; as also of number, time, person, and the like; is very frequent [in the Hebrew text], and needfull to be observed.” Ainsworth did not think that these places exhibited corruption of the Bible, but were examples of Hebrew literary convention. An example from the New Testament

55 Walton, “Prolegomena,” viii. 25, in Biblia Sacra Polyglotta: “An ex variantibus codicibus has notas collegerint, an vero ex proprio judicio & critica censura voces textuales recensuerint; & illam, quam meliorem lectionem judicabunt, in margine legendam posuerint? Hic vero distinctio est adhibenda. Nam promo, quaedam sunt circa voces obsceniores, quas per castiores esserendas in margine sub τὸ ɭ monuerunt. Has vero non esse ex codicum discrepantia, apertum est; sed ex Rabbinorum audacia & superstitione. Sacri enim scriptores nunquam scripsissent voces, quas noluerunt legi; nec alias eorum loco in textu substituissent. Si enim aures offendunt, cum leguntur; cur non etiam legentis oculos: cum tam per oculos, quam per aures turpia repræsentari animo possint?”
is the difference in the number of thieves in Matthew 27:44 and Luke 23:39. Another example is the difference of animals in Matthew 21:7 (ass and colt) and Mark 11:7 (colt).  

Lukin, in the second half of the seventeenth century, also argued that the alleged "defect" that exists in the rhetorical expressions of the Bible is not in fact a defect of the Word of God, but a possible difficulty that may arise in understanding the sense of the text. Thus, the "defect" is pertinent to interpretation or translation, not to the nature of Scripture. Lukin illustrated examples such as ellipsis (omission), metalepsis (short form), possible contradiction, and change of word order. This seeming difficulty can be resolved by reading Scripture by Scripture. Psalm 68:18 can be fully understood in comparison with Ephesians 4:8. Lukin believed that philological study of the text will eventually resolve the difficulty and will lead to a proper understanding of the intended sense of Scripture.

Not that we accuse the Scripture of deficiency, or bring our selves under the sentance of such as add to the word of God... so the sence of the Scripture is Scripture, and we do not add to that... the style of Scripture being so concise and short, that the nature of the things doth necessarily require, sometimes a supplement of some words fully to express the mind of the Author in our lanugage... we have in our own Translation, where the Translators have added what was thought necessary to expresse clearly the true genuine sense of the Scripture.  

The orthodox doctrine of Scripture was considerably reinforced by the textual and philological study of the masoretic text in the rabbinic tradition. While many of the

---


earlier English theologians defended the integrity and authority of Scripture solely on
dogmatic grounds, Weemse began to employ the masoretic study of the Hebrew text to
uphold the same cause. His keen interest in textual and philological study of the Hebrew
text combined with his orthodox theological orientation with the result that together they
produced a much-needed explanation of the integrity of Scripture.

2. Masoretic Studies and Hebrew Philology

Alongside the rapid development of the formal doctrine of Scripture in the course
of debates with the Catholic church, Protestant orthodoxy faced new challenges in the
early seventeenth century: Jewish masoretic philological study and emerging textual
criticism. When in the mid-sixteenth century the Protestant church was founded upon its
basic Bible thesis, principium omnium fidei articulorum (the first principle of articulation
of all faith), the church enjoyed the total security of the text for her theology. But when
new historical and philological findings seemed to lead to the conclusion that the
corrupted Hebrew text could be amended by scientific analysis, the security she had
cherished till then seemed to suddenly fall into danger. One of the most heatedly-debated
textual problems was the debate over the antiquity and authority of the vowel-points and
accents of the Hebrew Bible. Though in the earlier stage this debate was carried out in
the context of the emerging critical studies of the Masorah, later it was heavily involved
in the heated doctrinal controversy with Catholics. The basic issues of this dispute were,
primarily, how the Protestant orthodox theologians regarded the historical and
philological analysis of the scriptural tradition within their theology and, secondarily, how they used it for their theology and biblical hermeneutic.  

The debate over the vowel-points and accents had a long history. Though vehemently debated in the seventeenth century, it was already discussed as early as the ninth century by both Jews and Christians, and continued to be debated later in the nineteenth century. There had been various opinions on the issue in question—some thought the vowel-points existed from the very beginning of humanity, some from Moses, others from Ezra, even others from the Masoretes of the post-Talmudic period. The earliest incentive for the debate in the post-Reformation period came from a Rabbi called Elias Levita, the father of modern study of Hebrew. In 1538 he published Massoreth Ha-Massoreth, a commentary on the masoretic apparatus. To the alarm of the general Jewish community, he stated that “the vowel-points and the accents did not exist either before Ezra or in the time of Ezra, or after Ezra till the close of the Talmud.” In spite of this late addition of the vowel-points, he believed that the Hebrew text was pure and certain thanks to the philological faithfulness of the Masoretes. Levita further contended that the oral tradition of the Hebrew text was settled with the invention of the

---


60 Walton, Considerator, pp. 206-207; Diestel, Geschichte, p. 335.
vowel-points and accent marks. The masoretic scholars of Tiberias added these when
the Hebrew language ceased to be used in every day speech. Appealing to the authority
of Abraham Ibn Ezra, he claimed that the masoretic scholars were “the foundation, for
from them were the Masoretes, and from them we have received all our vowel-points.” 61
Levita, along with the long tradition of Masoretes, took the oral tradition of the Hebrew
text to be a faithful transmission of the revelation of God through generations, down to
the sages of Tiberias, “who wrote it down, and called it Massorah.” Levita firmly
believed that the Hebrew text and its vowels were faithfully transmitted. Concerning the
nature of plene and defective, he wrote:

Nothing new whatsoever was added by the men of the Great Synagogue
out of their own understanding; but that Ezra transcribed them, into his
copy of the Law, just as he found them in the Codex of the Law which
was made from the scroll of the Law of Moses received from Sinai, and
which the prophet Jeremiah concealed, according to the opinion of some,
without adding anything to it or taking anything from it. 62

Ginsburg summarizes effectively the conclusion of Levita’s masoretic study by saying
that though he advocated the later invention of the vowel-point signs, he believed the
invention of the signs was not arbitrarily made but followed “the true and genuine
reading as it came from the inspired writers of the respective books; and, consequently,
the reading which these points have fixed is as much of divine authority as the letters, the

York: KTAV Publishing House, 1968), p. 131; For more about Levita see Gerard E. Weil, Elie Levita:

62 Levita, Massoreth, p. 119.
difference between them being, that the letters were written, whilst the points were transmitted by oral tradition.\textsuperscript{63}

Levita’s work was generally accepted by both Catholics and Protestants soon after its publication. Besides the common enmity towards Jews, Catholics and Protestants also had a common heritage of Hebrew scholarship, as represented by Nicholas of Lyra and Reuchlin. There were, however, diametrically opposing reasons for the mutual agreement on accepting Levita’s view. The Roman part of Christendom welcomed Levita’s view more than the Reformers did because they thought his claim added a long awaited weapon for the Catholic cause to undermine the newly emerging Protestant leaders’ motto, \textit{sola scriptura}.

Luther knew that the Hebrew Bible at the time of Jerome was not pointed. The Jews, said Luther, being “enemies of Scripture, not friends,” manufactured “the very capricious method of pointing, which is full of ambiguity” and “arbitrary use of the points.” He concluded: “Therefore I often pronounce contrary to the points, unless the previous meaning agrees with the New Testament… Hence I do not worry much about the above [superscript vowel-point system] and below [subscript vowel-point system] of the rabbis.”\textsuperscript{64} A pre-critical understanding of Scripture coupled with the patterns of spiritual exegesis used in the medieval period and early Reformation era made the

\textsuperscript{63} Ginsburg, Introduction to Levita’s \textit{Massoreth Ha-Massoreth}, pp. 55-56.

philological findings of masoretic study unnecessary for their interpretation. For
Luther, the late appendage of the vowel-points was “merely an imperfect aid” for his
Christian exegesis. Thus, whenever he found an improved meaning, namely a Christian
meaning, he did not hesitate to reject “the artificial Hebrew of the rabbis” and their
“inferior meaning.” Calvin also acknowledged the late invention of the vowel-point
signs, but had a milder view towards the Jews. He firmly believed in “how much care the
old scribes” used in inventing the points according to the original text, but at the same
time advised the reader to have “some discrimination” in studying the pointed Hebrew
text, that is, to discriminate Christian exegesis from the Jewish exegesis.

In this theological climate, the Protestants would not adopt the rabbinical tradition
of the Hebrew vowel-points for their Christian reading of Scripture after having discarded
the tradition of the church, as expressed by the Catholics. More than that, by rejecting
the alleged church tradition and rabbinic tradition, the Protestants maintained a freedom
for a purely Protestant understanding of Scripture.

Catholic theologians had a different motivation for examining the issue. Their
different motivation, supported by the newly emerging textual-critical study of the
biblical manuscripts, finally led them to a Pyrrhonian perspective, which argued against
the Protestant doctrine of Scripture, namely, the ultimate authority and clarity of

---

Bachmann, p. 213.

66 John Calvin, Commentary on Zechariah 11:7.

Scripture. This Pyrrhonianistic argument went as follows: if the Hebrew vowel-points and accents, which are important for understanding the right sense of Scripture, were added at a later date as human invention, and thus non-inspired and non-canonical as is the consonant part, then the Protestant claim that Scripture alone is the sole foundation of faith and practice should be shattered. This theological judgment was easily extended to biblical exegesis. From the late invention of the Hebrew vowel-points and accents the Catholics argued for uncertainty of the Hebrew Bible. It is only a "very nose of wax," in the words of John Morinus who probably borrowed the word from Origen. If the Hebrew Scripture is uncertain, then there must be a judge that determines the proper sense of Scripture; Catholics argued that the judge is the church. This Catholic assertion cut through the very heart of Protestant theology, especially when the vowel-points debate went together with the assertion that the consonantal part of the text has been altered from the original. The result that Catholic polemicists wanted to achieve was to place the authority of the church and church tradition over Scripture, restore the priesthood, and vindicate Catholic dogma with the reading of their Latin translation.

68 Woodbridge, Biblical Authority, pp. 85-86.


In this theological context, the problem of the Hebrew vowel-points became the “Achilles-heel” of the orthodox dogma of biblical inspiration. Protestant reactions to the Catholic advance sometimes appeared as a retreat from the first generation Reformers’ position. Partly from a hatred of the Jews, partly from a fear that the Protestant cause was giving in to the Catholic advance, and partly from dogmatic orientation, some Protestant divines began to claim that the vowel-points, accents, and consonants were of divine origin. On the continent A. Polanus (1561-1620) and Andrew Rivet (1572-1651) wrote against Levita’s view of the Hebrew vowel-points. Polanus deduced the divine origin of the vowel-points from the nature of Scripture. Since Scripture came from God through his scribes, it must be pure and certain in both sense and word, therefore both vowels and accents must have been given by him, for without them the words cannot be understood and their meaning is uncertain. Though Rivet did not take the problem of Hebrew vowel-points as seriously as Polanus did, he also attributed their origin to the original scribes.

The Protestant battle to defend dogmatically the authority and antiquity of the Hebrew vowels was initiated by Johannes Buxtorf, the father, in his commentary on the Masorah, Tiberias sive Commentarius Masorethicus, published in 1620 at Basel. In this book Buxtorf appealed through Azariah de Rossi to rabbinic tradition for the antiquity and divine authority of both the consonants and vowels of the Hebrew Scripture. One

71 Kraus, Geschichte, p. 44.

important reason he suggested was that without points there was no way to understand and transmit the correct reading. Though he argued on philological and historical grounds, using various Jewish sources, the conclusion that his argument led to was generally dogmatic and not critical.\textsuperscript{73} Although his work had a weaker argument than Levita's, for a long time it continued to inspire many orthodox theologians to write for the Protestant cause against the Catholics. Buxtorf's influence was especially strong in Switzerland and Germany. The \textit{Formula Consensus Helvetica} was written in Switzerland in 1675 with the clear goal to translate the philological debate into a confessional creed.\textsuperscript{74}

Buxtorf's work did not, however, unite the Christian world nor was his position the only view of post-Reformation orthodoxy. In opposition to Buxtorf, Joseph Scaliger and John Drusius wrote that the vowel signs were later than Jerome.\textsuperscript{75} But the work of crucial importance for later Reformed biblical studies came from a Saumur Reformed theologian, Louis Cappel. Only four years after the publication of Buxtorf, Cappel published his \textit{Arcanum punctationis revelatum}, in which he expanded and elaborated Levita's arguments in a more convincing way than Buxtorf's development of de Rossi.

\textsuperscript{73} For the content of Buxtorf's \textit{Tiberias} see Burnett, \textit{From Christian Hebraism}, pp. 216-28.

\textsuperscript{74} For the general intention of the authors of this confession see Richard A. Muller, \textit{PRRD}, II:83-86; Woodbridge, \textit{Biblical Authority}, p. 88.

\textsuperscript{75} Bowman, "Forgotten Controversy," p. 51.
Cappel’s text-critical study, which orthodox theologians could no longer avoid, had a significant impact on biblical hermeneutic in the Protestant church.\textsuperscript{76}

Cappel’s familiarity with the Arabic language, which he could understand without the vowel-points, helped him support Levita’s position that the vowel punctuation marks were not necessary for the Jews to understand the biblical text. More importantly, he supported Levita’s view on the purity and integrity of the Hebrew text.\textsuperscript{77} The Masoretes’ vowel-points were not an arbitrary invention but faithfully expressed the original reading of the text. Thus, the vowel-points were not based on a mere human invention but on the reading of the Holy Spirit. The faithfulness of the Masoretes in their oral transmission was accepted and used to support the Protestant cause.

In his later book \textit{Critica Sacra} (1650), however, Cappel advanced to a more critical opinion on the purity of Scripture that the orthodox could not accept. Because he thought that Scripture should be subject to the same critical analysis as other literature, Cappel’s scientific criticism went beyond the necessity that masoretic studies demanded. With this scientific criticism Cappel postulated that the Hebrew text was corrupted by variant readings, not only by the carelessness of the copyists but also by the introduction of the square consonants and the vowel-points and that, therefore, the most likely version

\textsuperscript{76} Kraus, \textit{Geschichte}, pp. 43-46.

could be found by critical method. Cappel’s view in turn was answered by Buxtorf
the younger, in his *A Treatise on the Origin* in 1648.

The Continental debate between the Buxtorfs and Cappel was imported into the
British Isles and appeared as a debate between Brian Walton on one side, and John Owen
and Thomas Godwin on the other side. In the Prolegomena of the great *Biblia Sacra
Polyglotta* (1657), Walton attempted to elaborate the opinion of Levita and the earlier
view of Cappel. But this scholarly work of biblical philology faced the dogmatic
opposition of John Owen. Owen, who feared losing the Protestant foundational doctrine
of Scripture to the Catholic cause as described in the argument of Walton, wrote at least
three long dogmatic treatises on the subjects of Hebrew vowel-points and the integrity of
Scripture between 1659 and 1661. More mild in tone than Owen, Thomas Godwin in
1655 also supported the opinion of Buxtorf. Godwin argued that the vowels and accents
were from the sacred scribes such as Ezra, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi. He also said
that the *keri* and *kethiv* were of the same “divine authority,” because “the difference it
selfe primarily and purposely was intended by the Prophets, and holy penmen of the
Scripture.”

---

Controversy,” p. 54; Muller, “Debate over vowel points,” pp. 61-62.

79 John Owen, *Of the Divine Original of the Scriptures and Integrity and Purity of the Hebrew and Greek

The issue of the Hebrew vowels and accents was originally introduced in masoretic study as a philological problem. As the issue advanced, however, it embraced not only the problem of the doctrine of Scripture but also the problem of Scripture tradition in the church. The latter problem continued to be redefined and re-elaborated by the coming generations of the Reformed scholars. These issues became complicated as purely scholarly research became more intertwined with confessional interests in the uneasy theological setting of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. They became more colored by bitter arguments so that positive expositions of philological and historical analyses were often distorted and abused by different factions. This was not only true for inter-denominational debate but also for intra-Protestant discussions. For example, Walton complained that Owen so abused his masoretic study that he was set up to provide Catholic opponents a weapon to undermine the Protestant doctrine of Scripture.\(^8^1\)

John Weemse' work on biblical studies belongs to the early development of critical-philological study of the masoretic text in the British Isles. Bowman evaluates Weemse as "an accomplished Hebraist" and the "Scottish Lightfoot," and saw Weemse as "the first to propagate in Britain in print the views of Cappelus."\(^8^2\) The period in


\(^{8^2}\) Bowman, "Forgotten Controversy," pp. 55, 59.
which Weemse wrote was the time exactly between the Continental debate of the
Buxtorfs and Cappel, and its imported dispute in England between Walton and Owen. It
was also between two learned Hebraists of England who both dogmatically defended the
divine origin of the vowel-points, Broughton and Lightfoot. It is worth remembering the
religious and academic atmosphere of early and mid-seventeenth century England in
order to appreciate Weemse’s position in regard to the Hebrew vowel-points and accents.
In 1659, twenty-three years after Weemse’s death, Owen wrote treatises on Scripture
with a dogmatic orientation. On biblical criticism of Walton, Owen’s words are
unequivocal:

The greater gain and reputation for erudition and skill is gained, the more
violently they throw off all respect for God and men, and the greater heap
of unsafe, doubtful, and even plain stupid conjecture they rear up! Such
clearly have no sense of horror at what they are doing, for the ambitious
intellectuals of our generation rush so eagerly to the battle that we can
only stand in fear of what is still to come from them.\textsuperscript{83}

Goold is quite right when he says the following in regard to the theological atmosphere of
Owen’s age.

As critical research multiplied the various readings by the inspection of
the ancient codices, Protestant divines took alarm, and, trembling for the
ark of truth, discountenanced such inquires. That Owen was altogether
free from the panic cannot be affirmed. We must sympathize however,
with any pious jealousy for the honour of the holy oracles, in an age when
sound principles of criticism had not been clearly established.\textsuperscript{84}

\textsuperscript{83} John Owen, \textit{Biblical Theology}, p. 503.

\textsuperscript{84} William H. Goold, “Prefatory Note,” pp. 354-56.
Dutch and English churches were slow to take part in this intense controversy and thus late in settling the issue. In the British Isles, many orthodox theologians, such as Broughton, Lightfoot, and Godwin, joined the group that followed the dogmatic position. Broughton declared with the help of de Rossi that “for characters 22 vowels and accents was under Moses in the same form, as this day” just as all other languages have. He bluntly asserted that “the old Serpent doth breath deadlier poysen against the authority of Gods word, by teaching, that the vowels are not from God: but invented by Rabbins of Tiberia, set upon Tiberias lake.”

John Lightfoot’s words are no less dogmatic and unfavorable towards Jews than Broughton’s. He said of the Jews who were alleged to have invented the vowel-points, they are “a kind of men mad with Pharisaism, bewitching with traditions and bewitched; blind, guileful, doting... Men, how unfit, how unable, how foolish, for the undertaking so divine a work!”

More than twenty years before Owen and Lightfoot dogmatically asserted the purity and authority of Scripture, Weemse used the best available biblical scholarship of his day to uphold the Reformed doctrine of Scripture as well as to further Reformed biblical interpretation. Weemse’s work as a Reformed orthodox hermeneutician and exegete of Scripture shows that it is a mistake to claim, as Kraeling and Hayes do, that “the Reformed theologians... held fast to the formal principle without any qualification.”

---


and who thought that the Formula Consensus Helvetica to represent "the unanimity and resoluteness" of the Reformed orthodoxy.\textsuperscript{87}

In his first edition of the \textit{Christian Synagogue} (1623), Weemse agreed with the eminent Buxtorf and Broughton, saying that "the points and accents are naturally bred with the Scriptures, delivered by God to Moyses, out of Mount Sinai, and so to the posterity."\textsuperscript{88} Weemse had read Elias Levita and Louis Cappel, but in his early years of writing his dogmatic orientation did not yet allow him to integrate the Reformed cause with the use of the newly emerging critical scholarship. His acquaintance with Buxtorf's \textit{Tiberias}, the Talmud, the \textit{Zohar} and the theological treatises of his countrymen such as Perkins, Whitaker, and Broughton formed his theological mind till his 1630 edition of \textit{Christian Synagogue}.

Weemse changed his view in the third edition of \textit{Christian Synagogue} and embraced the position of Levita and Cappel, namely that the vowel-points were not included in the original Hebrew text but added in the post-Talmudic period by the Masoretes. Weemse's later view on the Hebrew vowel-points is found in the section of "the second helpe: ζηγματολογιω, or the right pointing of a Scripture" in his \textit{Christian Synagogue} and chapter XIV "that the points were not originally with the Letters from the beginning" of his \textit{Exercitations Divine}. Interestingly, while advocating his changed view on the Hebrew vowel-points and accents, Weemse does not drop the citation he quoted


\textsuperscript{88} Weemse, \textit{Synagogue}, in \textit{Works} [1636], vol. 1, p. 38.
from the Talmud and the Zohar which he had used to support the former view, but rather intensified that position by adding one more citation from the Talmud. He appeals for his new view of the vowel-points to the Jerusalem Talmud and Zohar:

No consonants can be pronounced without them [figures of vowels]. Of the latter points, the Jews say in the Jerusolymian Talmud, Othun cullebu cegnu. Phalo naphsha, Letters without points are like a body without a soule; and so Zohar saith, hakkore belo hammetheg carreketh belo barezten. He who readeth without points, is as he who rydeth without a bridle. And again he saith, colperush shelo ganal derech hatagnamim Lo tob Lo, Every exposition that is not according to the points and accents, is not to be followed: the Jews call the accents tagnanim because they season the reading, and give it the right relish, as sawce doth the meat.89

The reason why he did not drop the former citations is clear—it is because Weemse finally understood that the frequently quoted words of the Talmud and Zohar, along with the Bahir,90 namely that the letters are like the body while the vowel-points are like the soul, are not about the age of the Hebrew pronunciation marks. He thought they rather pointed out the significant value of vowels and accents for understanding the letters of the text.

The main point of Weemse’s mature view on the Hebrew vowel-points lies in his distinction between the “valor” or value of vowels and the “figure” or sign of vowels. The letters in the Scriptures have two sort of points, either in valour or in figure; the points in valour were from the beginning delivered by Moyses in mount Sinai, but the figures of them were found out afterwards by the Mazorites, and no consonant can be pronounced without them.91

89 Weemse, Synagogue, in Works [1636], vol. 1, pp. 48-49.

90 Bowman, “Forgotten Controversy,” p. 49.

91 Weemse, Synagogue, in Works [1636], vol. 1, p. 48.
What is of the later origin is the sign of vowels, while the value of vowels was from
the time of Moses, for without the value it is not possible to understand the sense of
words. Weemse adduces this distinction between the value and sign of vowels as his
answer to the long-debated argument that without vowel-points and accents the Jews
could not read and understand the text. This was vigorously argued by Buxtorf in an
attempt to prove that the vowel-points and accents marks had always been part of the
Hebrew text. This is also the issue that Levita dealt with as an additional remark in his
discussion.⁹²

This problem must be answered before suggesting any historical arguments for
the later addition of the signs, for if the Jews in fact could not read and understand the
text without the vowel signs, any argument for the later addition of the vowel signs loses
its validity. Because it is such a crucial issue, Weemse takes it as the first discussion in
his section of the vowel-points. Weemse cites two arguments of Buxtorf: that without the
vowel signs understanding the text was not possible and that “there are many of the
accents set downe in the Talmud before the Mazzorites found them out.”⁹³ Against these
arguments Weemse claimed, first, that the Jews had three letters in their alphabet that
served as vowels: ה, י, and כ. Secondly, he argued that “every letter in the Hebrew hath
the owne valour naturally, and every word the owne accent whereby it is pronounced, and
every pharase may bee read and understood without any of them.” He grounded his

⁹² Cf. Levita, Massoreth Ha-Massoreth, p. 127.

⁹³ Weemse, Exercitations. in Works [1636], vol. 3, p. 49.
argument on his linguistic study of other languages such as Arabic, Syriac, and Aramaic. These “dialects of the Hebrew,” said Weemse, did not have the vowel-point or accent signs from the beginning, but only added them later for the purpose of helping those who were not familiar with this oral tradition. He further contended that the Greek tongue did not have vowel and accent signs from the beginning, and appealing to Scaliger, that the old Latin did not have them either. As the Latins said “bne for bene, ptere for petere,” so the Egyptians and Persians read the letters without vowels. Thus, pronunciation marks were not a necessary requirement for the vernacular speakers to understand the text, but were added later for the “strangers to that language to help them more easily to reade it.”

94 Weemse, Synagogue, in Works [1636], vol. I, pp. 49-50; For a similar view see Walton, Considerator, pp. 211-13-221-30; idem., “Prolegomena,” iii, 49 in Biblia Sacra Polyglotta: “For vowels are as it were the souls of all expressions, the souls which give them life and move them, therefore the vowels are expressed by the voice since the voice is articulated through the use of them. They reply that is very true that no language can be without vowels nor can any expression be pronounced without vowels. What they infer from this in favor of the antiquity of the vowel points we reject. For this language had from the beginning and still has both vowels and consonants form which it corrects just like other languages. Nor should we listen to the grammarians if we speak properly the grammarians who expunge the vowels from the letters with white color and want to agree that all the letters are consonants. For especially these letters α, β, γ, and often τ and (just as it seemed to Jerome and others also) υ are today considered only as consonants but they were once used also as vowels. The Hebrews had just as many letters as other nations; since the other nations took letters from Hebrew letters. So why would Hebrews not be able to express with their 22 letters all of the same words as the other nations?”

“Vocales enim sunt dictionum quasi animae, quae eas viviscent & movent: unde a voce dicuntur vocalia, quia eorum adminiculum vox articulata profertur. Resp. verissimum esse, nullam linguam vocalibus carere posse, nec vocem ullam sine vocalibus pronunciari. Quod vero hinc inserunt pro punctorum vocalium antiquitate, negamus. Nam habuit ab initio, habatque haec lingua, tam vocales, quam consonas, ex quibus constat, instar aliarum linguarum: nec audienti sunt Grammatici, si stricte & proprie loquamur, qui vocales ex literarum albo expungunt, & omnes literas consonas esse volunt. Nam τ & κ praecepue, saepe τ & (ut Hieronymo, aliasque placet) υ, quae hodie pro consonis tantum habentur, olim pro vocalibus erant usurpatae. Tot sane literas Hebrae habebant, quot aliæ nationes, cum ab ipsis caeteræ nationes literas hauserint. Cur itaque non potuerint Hebraei omnia sua vocabula viginti duabus literis exprimere, ut aliæ nationes?”
In chapter XIV of *Exercitations Divine* Weemse makes his point clearer by saying that “now it resteth to show that the Points, the *accidentall ornaments* were not from the beginning.”\(^5\) This assessment that the Hebrew vowel-points and accents are only “accidental ornaments” must have been quite striking to those who were familiar with Buxtorf’s view on them.\(^6\) By the term “ornament” Weemse emphasized the difference between the vowel as value and the vowel as sign of the value. The vowel signs are accidental in so far as the Jews could read the unpointed text without problem, but the signs became necessary for those who were not familiar with the Jewish traditional pronunciation systems.

This latter point explains Weemse’s major concern for discussing the Hebrew vowel-points. He is much more interested in taking this matter into practical exegesis for better interpretation of the Hebrew text than arguing dogmatically on the problem of the authority of Scripture as was John Owen nearly thirty years later. Thus, Weemse says that “the right poynting of the Scripture, by the accents found out, is a most necessary helpe for understanding the Text” and that “the not reading the point made a wrong reading.”\(^7\) The vowel-points were a necessary help especially for the “Gentiles” whose mother tongue was not Hebrew. In the masoretic invention of the vowel-points Weemse even believed the providence of God for Christians—“But we who are not naturall Jewes

---


\(^6\) Burnett, *Christian Hebraism*, p. 222.

\(^7\) Weemse, *Synagogue*, in *Works* [1636], vol. 1, pp. 50, 52.
should be thankfull to God; because wee have these helpes to further us in the reading.”

Weemse's conviction that the vowel-signs faithfully preserve the original sense of the Hebrew text is well illustrated by his exegetical study. For example, he commented on Exodus 34:28 that the punctuation mark *Atnach* before “and” should be part of the text. With the punctuation mark the text reads: “And he was with the Lord forty daies and forty nights, and he did neither eate bread nor drinke water: and he wrote upon the Tables.” The punctuation mark *Atnach* ensures the proper sense of the text that it was not Moses but God himself who wrote on the tablet.

Weemse adduced seven grounds for the late addition of the vowel-points to the Hebrew text. First, Weemse believed that the earliest text was Samaritan and was not pointed with vowels. Second, the unpointed Hebrew documents were customarily used by the ancient Jews and this custom is evidenced by some public documents such as their bill of divorce. Third, the names of the vowels and accents are not in Hebrew but in Aramaic tongue. This implies that they were imposed “after the captivity.” Fourth, the translation of the Seventy is very different from the Hebrew text. This difference was caused by the fact that the translators used the unpointed Hebrew text. Fifth, a variant reading in the Hebrew text, “*ketibh velo keri*, when the words are written one way, and

---


read another,” was caused by the unpointed text. Sixth, the so-called daughter languages of Hebrew, such as Aramaic, Arabian, and Assyrian, did not have points in ancient times. Therefore, it is not improbable that the Hebrew text was not pointed from the beginning. Seventh, Weemse suggested as the last ground for his argument an episode of Jewish misreading of the unpointed Hebrew text. He cited a story from the Talmud that Joab killed his master by mistake because he misinterpreted נֶא “memory” for רֶא “male” in the text of Deut. 25:19.100

After the historical and philological evidences suggested by Cappel convinced him of the novelty of the Hebrew pronunciation signs, Weemse faced two theological needs that he had to satisfy: namely to settle the issue regarding the integrity of the Bible following the earlier Reformers and to criticize Catholic and Jewish interpretations of the Bible. Weemse felt compelled to begin with historical and philological findings in order to provide a proper judgment regarding these theological matters. The distinction between vowel sign and vowel sound was for him a necessary basis upon which other textual and hermeneutical problems should be solved. With that distinction clarified, he went on to emphasize the faithful transmission of the reading of the Hebrew text in the Jewish synagogue. At this point he was highly indebted to assorted rabbinic writings and Christian Hebraists. Using the authorities of Augustine, Jacob ben Chajim, Levita, and Cappel, he stated that the Masoretes were “faithfull keepers” and “a hedge of the Law.”

Though added in the post-Talmudic period, the vowel-signs, Weemse emphasized, are a faithful addition to preserve the pure pronunciation and the sense of the Hebrew text. With the help of rabbinic tradition, Weemse endorsed the traditional Reformed doctrine of Scripture that the Hebrew text was preserved with undefiled accuracy, thus, it was the pure and perfect authority of God for Christian faith and practice.

Thus the Masoreth keepe us that we goe not amisse, and their observations are a hedge to the Law... By great paines and wonderfull care those Masoreth, numbred the letters and words of the Scripture, that none of them might perish... therefore the Hebrews say, Gnim shimmureth hatorah, that is, the studie of the Masoreth was Cum conservatione legis, for the preserving of the Law from corruption.  

Appealing to the Jewish tradition Weemse concluded that “the whole Canon was compleate, and none of those Bookes perished.” With significant knowledge of the Masorah Weemse refuted the Catholic challenges of James Gordon, Bellarmine, and Morinus who argued that the Hebrew text was corrupted and therefore should be corrected with the help of the Latin Vulgate.

3. Conclusion

John Weemse’s Hebrew scholarship made quiet, but significant progress in textual and philological studies of the Old Testament and in the formation of the

101 Weemse, Exercitations, in Works [1636], vol. 3, pp. 129. See also p. 110; For a similar doctrine see Broughton, “Epistle to the Nobility,” in Works [1662], p. 559; David Kaufmann, “Lazarus de Viterbo’s Epistle to Cardinal Sirleto concerning the Integrity of the Text of the Hebrew Bible,” JQR, Original Series, 7 (1895): 279-81.

102 Weemse, Exercitations, in Works [1636], vol. 3, p. 118.

Reformed orthodox doctrine of Scripture. First, as early as the first quarter of the seventeenth century in England he adopted the best available tradition of masoretic study, as argued by Jacob ben Chajim, Levita, and Cappel and distinguished between vowel-points as value and their faithful representation in signs. The historical and textual findings did not threaten the integrity of Scripture for Weemse's orthodoxy. Rather, from the philological and textual studies of the masoretic text Weemse found a groundwork upon which he supported the traditional Reformed doctrine of Scripture. Weemse's view of the Hebrew vowel-points would be accepted as the standard view of the study of Hebrew texts in later centuries.\textsuperscript{104} Weemse's early settlement of this issue adumbrates the view of Walton, probably the greatest Hebraist of the mid seventeenth century England. Walton might have read Weemse's books which he had in his library.\textsuperscript{105} It is most probable that Weemse and Walton used similar sources for their masoretic studies and interpretation of the Hebrew Bible. It is worth noting that while many of the great theologians and Hebraists of England from the late sixteenth to the mid-seventeenth centuries appealed to rigid doctrines and inflexible interpretation, Weemse had keen eyes to see the value of the then emerging critical-philological scholarship. His ability to adopt the historical and philological findings helped him to integrate the findings to the traditional doctrine of Scripture and to the practice of biblical exegesis.

\textsuperscript{104} Muller, "The Debate over the vowel-points," pp. 65, 70.

\textsuperscript{105} Brian Walton, Bibliotheca Waltoniana (London, 1683), p. 29.
Second, Weemse’s use of the Jewish synagogue tradition of the Hebrew text for upholding the orthodox doctrine of Scripture discloses his eclectic attitude toward the tradition. This position might have sounded striking in contrast to the pejorative view of the Jews that was popular from the medieval period and beyond, and in light of the Catholic assault. The inconsistency of the Protestants had been pointed out by the Catholics, for while claiming to be anti-traditionalists, the Protestants accepted the Jewish tradition as a significant foundation of their Scripture.\(^{106}\) Weemse was indeed eclectic in using church tradition for the basis of the doctrine of Scripture. He chose the tradition of the Hebrew text in the Jewish Synagogue, while opposing the traditional Catholic translation of it. His use of the Synagogue tradition, however, was not without Christian bias. Whenever he found, though very scarcely, that the Masoretes added foreign things in the margin or changed the text which was indeed understood within the Christian theology, he rigorously rejected the marginal reading and defended the purity of the text. This eclectic use of the Synagogue tradition, however, could be explained by Heiko Oberman’s concept “Tradition I.” The text tradition of the Jewish Synagogue could be included as an extension of this notion of “Tradition I,” namely that “sola Scriptura in no way negates the churchly tradition of doctrine and exegesis.”\(^{107}\)

Third, the debate over the vowel-points had significant implications for biblical hermeneutics. The implications of the debate revived an old question about whether

\(^{106}\) Bowman, “Forgotten Controversy,” p. 47.

\(^{107}\) Muller, \textit{PRRD}, II:350.
biblical study needs a special hermeneutic or could it be done with a general hermeneutic.\textsuperscript{108} Weemse is an example of the early orthodox exegetes who used textual philological research for the churchly pre-critical understanding of Scripture. His hermeneutic manual shows that his works are faithfully orthodox in clear continuity with the Reformers. Weemse’s works belonged, using Muller’s terms, to the traditional “exegesis according to the principles of *analogia Scripturae* and *analogia fidei*” and not to the later “more strictly textual exegesis associated with modern criticism.”\textsuperscript{109} Weemse rejected the general hermeneutics which Cappel later attempted to employ for reading Scripture. Despite his wide, more text-critical Hebrew scholarship, Weemse tenaciously clung to the special hermeneutic with which he demanded a special preconception of the nature of Scripture. One of the special styles of Scripture, said Weemse, is its marvelous coherence—“all things in the Scripture are fitly joyned and coupled together.”\textsuperscript{110} Being faithful to the Reformed tradition of biblical exegesis, his knowledge of masoretic philology and textual criticism that are represented by his discussion of the Hebrew vowel-points, did not lead him to Cappel’s critical reading of the Bible. Weemse’s position was quite different from either the stiff dogma of Scripture which was popular among some Protestants, or later modern textual historical criticism. From this early development of Weemse’s biblical interpretation should be understood the later


\textsuperscript{109} Muller, “The Debate over the vowel-points,” p. 53.

\textsuperscript{110} Weemse, *Exercitations*, in *Works* [1636], vol. 3, p. 106.
discussion concerning the implications of the text-critical apparatus on biblical hermeneutic carried on among Brian Walton, John Owen, and John Lightfoot.

Being an early Reformed orthodox theologian, Weemse’s position on the vowel-points was significantly shaped by his pre-critical dogmatic understanding of Scripture. The bottom line for his argument of the purity of the Bible are Christ’s words in Matthew “one jote or one title of the Law shall not passe.” Weemse argued that the Jews were “faithfull keepers” but “bad interpreters” of the Word. In order to uphold his Protestant doctrine of Scripture, he had to appeal to the providence of God working in the Jewish masoretic tradition, while arguing that the Roman doctrine of Scripture digressed from that tradition because its doctrine was based on the Latin Vulgate, a translation of the Hebrew original. Accordingly, Weemse’s doctrine of Scripture was significantly established by his study of the Masorah along with his evaluation of the Talmudic tradition. This does not mean, however, that he followed blindly the Jewish account of the Word of God. Rather he used the Jewish teaching and Masoretic tradition in order to establish and explain his Reformed biblical interpretation. In order to distinguish the Christian teaching from the Talmudic tradition, he stated that the Jews are “bad interpreters of Scriptures.”

Elements of scientific textual and philological studies are found in the early 17th century theologians, but their biblical study was structured by a dogmatic orientation of

---


theology. It is interesting to note that Weemse’s dogmatic conviction shaped his views of the integrity of Scripture, and at the same time that the emerging textual, critical works did not threaten his theological conviction but were used to support his dogmatic position. His views of the vowel-points, the marginal readings, and the alleged Jewish corruption, which he discussed with highly scholarly critical apparatus, stood alongside his theological view of the inspiration of Scripture as analogous to dictation. The emerging textual criticism did not create disturbance in his biblical study. The concept of the Bible among the Protestant orthodox was predominantly pre-critical. Robert Knox summarizes well the orthodox doctrine of Scripture in seventeenth century England:

This belief in the divine authorship of the Scriptures, their total consistency and their hidden witness to Christ was the basic conviction of these preachers and their belief was not shaken by problems arising from the formation of the Canon, by difficulties of translation, by textual obscurities, or by the possibility that the text as it now is had come into being through the weaving together of earlier and diverse strands of tradition. They were far too learned to be unaware of many difficulties but they were confident that careful study and interpretation would so resolve the difficulties that their basic conviction would be unshaken.\footnote{Robert Buick Knox, “Biblical Criticism in the Seventeenth Century,” in \textit{A Birthday Writing for John Cochrane O’Neill}, an unpublished book, ed. Peter Chave, (Alastair Halliday: Kings Norton & Trinity, Streatham, 1980).}

It was also Weemse’s theological conviction that the Holy Spirit who inspired the holy scribes also illumines the believers with the true sense of Scripture. For the Reformed orthodox Scripture was the Word of God which spoke directly to the present church. Perkins said of the Bible, in the typical tone of the seventeenth century orthodoxy: “The Scripture is the word of God written in a language fit for the Church by
men immediately called to be the Clerks, or Secretaries of the holy Ghost.  

Knox goes on, saying about the use of Scripture for the church:

There was an inner consistency in the Bible which made every part thereof a mine from which sure guidance for doctrine and morality could be extracted. This indeed remained the prevailing outlook until the startling new scientific, historical and theological investigations and speculations of the 19th century compelled readers of the Bible to re-examine and reshape their inherited framework of biblical thought.  

---


115 Knox, “Biblical Criticism.”
Chapter Five

Theory and Practice:
Hermeneutical Advance in the Works of John Weemse
(Four Helps)

In the late sixteenth and the seventeenth century, textual study of the Bible became increasingly refined as new manuscripts of Aramaic, Coptic, Syriac, Slavonic, Greek, and Arabic texts became available.¹ New ventures into textual criticism and hermeneutical work in biblical scholarship became necessary. Rabbinic studies began to be thought of in a more positive way, and an even greater number of exegetes searched out the right sense of Scripture with the help of rabbinic commentaries and literature on Jewish custom. Thus, though the fear of Judaizing still remained a hindrance, Christian scholars continued to stress the *veritas hebraica* together with an increasing emphasis on cognate languages. This joint movement of Protestant theology and humanism in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries produced numerous hermeneutical manuals, introductions to Scripture, and close analysis of the text in the original languages.²

---


This chapter will examine these hermeneutical and textual advances as found in Weemse's work. For Weemse, the benefit of reading the Bible in the original tongues, the "Vehicula Scientiarum," was a significant mark of "many learned and skillful guides" in his day. He was well aware that this benefit was comparatively new, not known to his predecessors. With these new helps used in the Bible study, he said, "ye shall understand the Properties and Phrases of the Holy Ghost, the ancient customes of the people of God, and the sweet allusions in the third, which otherwise ye shall never be able to understand."3 With these "modern" guides, Weemse believed, they could have a better understanding of the Bible, an understanding which was based on Reformation principles, not merely tied to its tradition but moving into an advanced comprehension of the Bible. Weemse appealed quite often to the authority of the classic theological literature from the early Church Fathers, medieval authorities, and his contemporaries and forerunners among the Reformed exegetes. However, instead of repeating their exegetical heritage, he introduced an advanced expertise in biblical exegesis, having based upon the ideas of classical exegetes such as Augustine, Calvin, Whitaker, and Perkins. Weemse's effort to focus on the biblical text rather than unnecessary theological dispute or explication,4 to establish the right sense of Scripture in its original languages,

---

3 Weemse, Exercitations, in Works [1636], vol. 3, the Epistle, p. 3; Cf. a similar concern for reading Scripture with Hebraism. Henry Ainsworth says in his annotations on the Psalms: "Now because many things, both for phrase and matter, are difficult to such as are not acquainted with Davids language, I have... annexed a few brieve notes, comparing the Scriptures, and conferring the best Expositors" in Annotations upon the Booke of Psalms, London, 1626, "A Preface Concerning David, his Life and Acts."

4 Weemse illustrated three errors of medieval scholastic methodology to be "their idle and vaine questions," "obscuritie of words," and "their manner of disputation" in Synagogue, in Works [1636], vol. 1, pp. 275-76.
and to apply the philological and Hebrew customary studies in his biblical exegesis was a logical outgrowth of the Reformation slogan, *sola scriptura*, and its own new heritage of the single literal sense of Scripture.⁵

There were several English scholars in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries who made philological and textual studies of the Bible in order to advance understanding of it, such as William Whitaker, William Perkins, John White, Henry Lukin, and John Smith.⁶ Among these, Weemse’s *Christian Synagogue* offers “the most scholarly and systematic methodology.”⁷ Weemse arranged diverse pieces of biblical philology and Semitic scholarship available in his day and made them useful exegetical tools. His systematic treatment of right interpretation of Scripture included the five most important areas of study of the masoretic text and rabbinic literature that should be used for Christian biblical exegesis. These are: the double reading of the masoretic line and margin; the right pointing of the Hebrew vowels and accents; the collation of Scripture with Scripture; the translation of Scripture; and the use of Hebrew custom.⁸ Weemse

---

⁵ Muller, *PRRD*, II:149-56; Burnett, *From Christian Hebraism*, p. 169.


⁸ Among the five “helps” the first four are examined in this chapter and the fifth has been studied in the previous chapter.
arranged these pieces into an integrated whole which would eventually produce the right sense of Scripture—the literal sense.\(^9\)

As a true orthodox theologian, Weemse based his biblical study on the traditional Protestant conviction of the relationship between the Word and the Spirit. Following the tradition, he described the method of reading Scripture as follows: “the means to come by the sense of the Scripture, are either internall, or externall.”\(^10\) The internal light comes from the illumination of the Holy Spirit. If the proper author of Scripture is the Holy Spirit, who used the holy scribes for actual writing, it should be understood in the same Spirit.\(^11\) Upon this theological foundation, Weemse attempted to build a linguistic argument which would eventually support the Protestant doctrine of Scripture and at the same time enhance exegesis of Scripture. Assuming this traditional Protestant theology, he moved on to the “external means,” that is, linguistic study of the biblical text in order to attain the right sense of Scripture.

Weemse equated the linguistic and textual works of the New Testament authors with the work of the Holy Spirit. When they translated “purim” into “lot,” “Siloe” into “sent,” “tabitha kumi” into “daughter arise,” and “Rabboni” into “master,” the proper subject of this translation was not the scribes, but the Holy Spirit. To the question, “Why doth the holy Ghost interpret these names?” he answered, “but to teach us that he would

---

\(^9\) The right sense of Scripture will be discussed in the seventh chapter.


have the Scriptures translated into knowne tongues, that the people might understand
them.”¹² If Scripture must be understood in the light of the Holy Spirit and if the proper
author of the linguistic works of Scripture is the same Spirit, then proper linguistic study
of the scriptural texts is not merely an academic tool but a lofty work helping to read the
mind of the Spirit. For Weemse, linguistic study of the scriptural text is a necessary step
toward the right understanding of the Holy Spirit.

1. Line Reading and Marginal Reading

As has been shown in the previous chapter, Weemse had an uncompromisingly
orthodox view on the integrity of the biblical text.¹³ One of the important issues of the
doctrine of Scripture in Weemse’s day was the nature and relationship between the line
and marginal readings. Weemse denied any possibility of ἀντιλεξίς (contrary reading)
between the two readings. The line and marginal readings, he thought, are either
ἀντιλεξίς (reading of no difference) or ἐτερολεξίς (reading of some small difference).
The line reading and marginal reading “make not a contrary reading, but a diverse
reading.” Diverse reading did not for Weemse, as later for Walton, mean difference in
meaning, but only a minimal change of typography.

Weemse argued that reading of small difference is found in the original text itself.

For example, Weemse suggested the cases of II Samuel 22:43 and Psalm 18:42. While

¹² Weemse, Exercitations, in Works [1636], vol. 3, p. 132.

¹³ I.e., chapter four.
the former text reads “I did stampe them as the myre of the streetes” (גֹּרֶם), the latter “I did cast them out as the myre in the streets” (גֹּרֶם). “Here is but small difference, *Daleth* is onely changed into *Resh*, the sense is all one.” Other examples of ἐπρόλεξις are II Samuel 22:11 and Psalm 18:11; II Samuel 22:27 and Psalm 18:26; and II Samuel 22:8 and Psalm 18:9.\(^{14}\) Under this rule lies Levita’s masoretic study:

> I discovered that the *Keri* and *Kethiv* are never found on *plene* and *defective*. That is to say, there is not a word to be found in the whole Bible which is written in the text *plene*, and the marginal reading of which is *defective* or *vice versa*; and the reason is, that the sense of the word is never affected by its being *defective* or *plene*.\(^{15}\)

Upon this foundational doctrine of Scripture Weemse proceeded to employ the double reading, that is, textual and marginal readings, for better understanding of the text.

> To marke the line reading, and the Marginall reading, helps much for the understanding of the Text in the Hebrew and Greeke. This Marginall reading is set downe in the great Mazora Bible in the Margent and the Text: and joyning both together, is called a double reading.\(^{16}\)

When the masoretic scholars followed the marginal reading but did not want to exclude the text, they sometimes created a diverse reading by putting the points in the masoretic text and the consonants in the margin. Though the text has only vowel-points, its meaning is to be drawn from the consonantal part which is in the margin. Thus, the text of Jeremiah 31:38 reads וַיַּעַשׂ עָנָא יָהּ, with two vowels standing alone. The margin provides the consonants corresponding to these vowels, יָהּ. “The word *Baim*, is

---


\(^{15}\) Levita, *Massoreth*, p. 112.

\(^{16}\) Weemse, *Synagogue*, in *Works* [1636], vol. 1, p. 42.
understood by the Points of it, which are in the Text, and so it is Baim, although it be not expressly written in the Text." Now, the line reading with the margin reads: "Behold, the days are coming." The opposite case is Jeremiah 51:3 where they set down the consonants of the words in the text but did not point the words. Thus, the verb רָדוּ (to tread) was not pointed in the text, but was to be understood along with the vowel part which is set down in the margin.¹⁷

Weemse held to two rules for such a double reading. The first concerns joining the two readings and the second rule deals with using the marginal reading to illustrate the line reading. First, "where the holy Ghost hath joyned both the readings, these we are to follow." Isaiah 51:14 has a marginal note which could be understood in two ways. רָדוּ רוּפֶה may mean "to open the prison" or "to open the eyes of the blind." Our Lord, said Weemse, joined these two readings together in Luke 4:18, "He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind." The first part of II Samuel 23:20 "and Benaiah the son of Jehoiada" has ר (lively). At the margin is written בַּר (strong). This marginal reading became a line reading in I Chronicles 11:22 instead of ר. Weemse said, "therefore we may joynie them both safely in the Text, He was a lively strong man." In the same way, the marginal reading of I Chronicles 11:11 became the line reading of II Samuel 23:8.²²

²² Weemse, Synagogue, in Works [1636], vol. 1, pp. 42-43.
Sometimes an Old Testament marginal reading becomes a line reading in the New Testament. In those cases, according to Weemse, the two readings may be safely joined together. The text of Proverbs 3:34 reads "he gives grace to the poor" (םיימע). But 1 Peter 5:5 cites the marginal reading of the text and reads "he gives grace to the humble" (םיימע). In this case, namely, when the holy scribes used the marginal reading in their text, Weemse said, "wee may safely joyne them both in the Text; He gives grace to the poore humble."\(^{19}\)

The line reading of Psalm 22:16 has יָרָק (to dig), while the margin יָרָק (like a lion). Whitaker, Fulke, and Weemse took this place as a matter of masoretic double reading. All of them, despite this difference of the text, claimed the purity of the Hebrew text, following the lead of Calvin. Weemse suggested reasons to choose the latter to be the right line reading of the Hebrew text. First, the grammar and circumstance of the context testify יָרָק instead יָרָק. Fulke argued that the word יָרָק was derived from the verb יָרָק (to pierce or dig), adding aleph.\(^{20}\) Secondly, Whitaker and Weemse appealed to the authorities who either saw the text with יָרָק, such as John Isaac Levita, or translators who chose it, such as Aquila "who was a great enemy to Christ," the Seventy, a Syriac version, and Petrus Galatinus.\(^{21}\) Weemse added one more reason, citing the opinion of

---

\(^{19}\) Weemse, *Synagoge*, in *Works* [1636], vol. 1, pp. 42-43.

\(^{20}\) Fulke, *A Defence*, p. 79.

Jacob ben Chajim, that the reading with נבוג was quite late, because there was no
material difference in this verse in the oriental and occidental Jewish reading.\(^{22}\)

Is this case an example of joined reading? Weems is not sure. In Christian
Synagogue, he said that since the Holy Spirit did not clearly join them together in
Scripture, that is, the marginal reading is not used in any other part of the Bible, “we
cannot translate, Psal. 22:16. They digged Lyon-like my hands and my feet.”\(^{23}\)
However, in Exercitations, he changed his view and affirmed the joined reading “they
lyon like digged,” and appealed for his translation to the Aramaic paraphrase, the
Septuagint, and Junius.\(^{24}\)

The second rule on double reading is that where the marginal readings are not
approved by the Holy Spirit, they could be used as illustration of the textual reading, only
if they do not contradict the textual reading. The marginal reading of I Kings 16:26 has a
singular form “in his sin,” while its line reading a plural form “in his sins.” In this case,
we should not put both together and translate it as “every one of his sins,” but can use the
marginal reading as “illustration only.”\(^{25}\)

The text of Proverbs 4:3 has מלת אמא (before my mother), but its margin wrote מלת
(before the sons of my mother). The marginal note does not contradict the text, said

\(^{22}\) Weems, Exercitations, in Works [1636], vol. 3, p. 190 (additions).
\(^{23}\) Weemse, Synagogue, in Works [1636], vol. 1, pp. 45-46.
\(^{24}\) Weems, Exercitations, in Works [1636], vol. 3, p. 128.
\(^{25}\) Weemse, Synagogue, in Works [1636], vol. 1, p. 46.
Weemse, but provides an “illustration” for the text, because I Chronicles 3:5
illustrates the sons of Solomon’s mother. Thus, using the marginal reading as illustration,
Weemse agreed with Junius’ translation “hee was his mothers best beloved of all his
brethren.” 26 However, when the line reading is replaced or affected by marginal reading
without approval of the text tradition, the conclusion taken from that reading is not valid.27

Some claimed that the text and the margin of II Kings 8:10 contradict each other.
The text reads with אֱלֹהֵי, “goe and say unto him, thou shalt not recover; for the Lord hath
shewed me that he shall surely die.” But the margin reads with יִבְּרָט, “goe say unto him,
thou shalt recover, although the Lord shewed to me hee shall surely dye.” “The
marginall reading is not contrary to the Text,” said Weemse, “but serves for illustrating”
the intended sense of the text.28 In another place Weemse explained this text as a logical
equivocation, that is, it can be read in two different ways. The marginal reading says the
condition indefinitely; while the text definitely. The definiteness or indefiniteness in
Hebrew is distinguished by different grammatical construction. Appealing to the
authority of Regula Hebraorum, Weemse analyzed the Hebrew literary convention that
is expressed in the text.

26 Weemse, Synagogue, in Works [1636], vol. 1, pp. 43-44.
27 Weemse, Synagogue, in Works [1636], vol. 1, p. 269.
28 Weemse, Synagogue, in Works [1636], vol. 1, p. 45; Cf., John Mayer, A Commentary upon all the
Prophets Both Great and Small, London, 1652, on Isa. 49:5. Mayer says, citing Aquila, Symmachus, and
Theodotion, that there are fifteen places in the Hebrew Bible where אֱלֹהֵי is put for יִבְּרָט.
The Hebrewes observe, that when a negative is set downe before two verbs coming from the same root, then commonly it denieth doubtfully... but when the note of deniall is set betwixt the two verbs, then it certainly denyeth.  

The text of II Kings 8:10 has the note of denial before the two verbs that come from the same root: רֹתחָל תֵּל אֵל, “you may revive or you may not revive.” It is the same case with the Satan’s speech to Eve in the garden of Eden (Genesis 3:4): וַיֹּאמֶר לֵיהָ אֵל, “you may die or you may not die.”

This logical equivocation is a lawful literary convention in Hebrew custom, said Weemse. The gist of the equivocal sentence is to express the will of God in accommodation to the capacity of the human hearer.

_Goe tell him he may live, although the Lord said he should die; if ye respect his sickness, hee might live, for it was not deadly; yet the Lord said hee shoul die, respecting that which Hazael should doe unto him, for he did cast a wet cloath upon him, and smothered him. Why did the Lord set downe this speech so doubtfully? because faithlesse Benhadab would not beleue the truth when it was plainly told him._

Thus, Weemse’s translation of the text “thou maist certainly recover, howbe it the Lord hath shewed me thou shalt certainly die” expressed well the Hebrew literary convention, in this case, a logical equivocation. And the marginal reading “thou maist certainly recover, albeit the Lord hath shewed mee that hee shall surely die” does not contradict the sense of the text, but only illustrates the equivocal sense of the text.

Secondly, the text can be read in two ways depending on how the accent is interpreted. It is because of the reason that Maqeph that joins אֶל is sometimes a


syntactic accent and other times a euphonic accent. While a syntactic accent signifies a stop in a sentence, a euphonic accent does not. Weemse, following the translation of Juni.us, said that in this case *Maqqeph* is a euphonic accent and took the text as it is in the line reading and used the marginal reading as an illustration.\(^{31}\)

Weemse’s orthodox doctrine on the purity of the Hebrew text has been discussed in relation to the nature and relationship of textual and marginal readings. For Weemse, the double reading does not produce contradictory reading but diverse reading in the sense that the marginal reading either explains in different words or illustrates the textual meaning. The difference between the two readings is “but small difference,” such as typographical difference.\(^{32}\) However, when the “small difference” looms large, that is, when he faced a passage in which the marginal reading seems to be significantly different from the text, though the difference did not affect the sense of the text, he did not hesitate to drop the authority of the marginal note: “where the Mazorite notes seeme to impaire the credit of the Text, there we are not to follow them.”

An example of this impairing the credit of the text is a masoretic change of the text in a modest speech. While the text of II Kings 18:27 reads “they shall drinke their owne pisse,” the marginal note changed the text into modest terms, “they shall drinke the water of their owne feete.” II Kings 6:25 has “dove’s dung” which the marginal reading

---


put as “that which comes out of the holes of the Doves.” Weemse thought marginal reading impairs the line reading is the last verses of four books in the Old Testament. One of them is Isaiah. Because the verse “and their fire shall not be quenched” is terrible to Jewish ears, the Masoretes put the penult verse again in the end “and it shall come to passe, that from mouth to mouth, and from Sabbath to Sabbath, that all flesh shall come and bow before me.”

Thus, Weemse’s theological dictum is: “when the marginall reading is put for the line reading, we cannot gather any instruction from that. From wrong Analogy or Collation of Scripture with Scripture, wrong Doctrine is gathered.” This dictum is a logical outgrowth of the traditional principle of theological foundation that doctrine should be drawn from the literal sense of Scripture, not in allegorical senses.

The result of the double reading should not be confusion of the sense, but should “helpe us to come by the right sense of the Scripture.” It is very important for the orthodox Weemse to maintain that the double reading is not an addition to the text, but only an explanation of the text. In so far as the marginal reading explains the textual sense and does not add foreign sense to the text, said Weemse, there is no danger in using the marginal reading. Rather the marginal reading helps the reader to attain the right

33 Weemse, Synagogue, in Works [1636], vol. 1, p. 46.
34 Weemse, Synagogue, in Works [1636], vol. 1, p. 47.
35 Weemse, Synagogue, in Works [1636], vol. 1, p. 269.
36 Weemse, Exercitations, in Works [1636], vol. 3, p. 129.
sense of the text. Weemse had to emphasize that the diverse reading, which was caused by the double reading, does not lead to a double sense because such double reading was frequently abused by Catholic opponents to indicate a double sense.

Weemse answered them:

These diverse translations make not diverse senses in the Scriptures; for the sense is still one and the same: but these diverse translations helpe us onely, to come to the true meaning of the Scriptures, and so we must use these marginall and line readings, as we use these interpretations. When we see a blanke left in the Text, and supplyed in the Margent; this addeth nothing to the Text, as a word added sometime by a translatour, addeth nothing to the Text: So when the Masoreth put another word in the Margent, which is not in the Text; that word is set downe onely for explanation, and it addeth nothing to the Text.37

The diverse reading of the masoretic text had consequences for the translation of the biblical text. Weemse documented the evidence of the function of the marginal reading as explanation or illustration in the translation of Junius. Sometimes Junius followed either marginal reading or textual reading. In translating I Kings 22:49, Junius followed in his first translation the marginal reading (יִשָּׁבַע, Jehosaphat prepared ships), but in the second translation followed the textual reading (יָשָׁבֶע, Jehosaphat made, or enriched, the ships). At other times he combined both readings in his translation. He translated Psalm 22:16, combining “digging” and “like lion” as “they digged like lion,” just as the Aramaic paraphrase and the Septuagint read. He did the same when he translated

---

37 Weemse, Exercitations, in Works [1636], vol. 3, p. 130.
Proverbs 23:26 "let thine eyes observe my ways," by joining both יְהִי in the kethiv and יְּהֵו in the keri. 38

2. Right Pointing

The right pointing of the text, said Weemse, is "a most necessary helpe for understanding the Text" because it relates to the very fixation of the text itself: "the not reading the point made a wrong reading." 39 Calvin and Lively, long before Weemse's Christian Synagogue, were concerned about the Hebrew accents. Calvin knew that the lack of accent marks in the Hebrew text caused a mistake in the Septuagint translation. 40 Lively's chronological study of Daniel 9:24-25 focused on the accent marks that indicated "rest." 41 According to Schper,

Lively has shown himself to be a Hebraist who was more than passingly interested in Hebrew grammar. For him, not the elementary rules of syntax and grammar alone, but even the musical notation were matters to be absorbed by the student as necessary for the true interpretation of the Hebrew text. 42

What Calvin and Lively thought to be important for the translation and interpretation of the Hebrew text, Weemse systematized in his hermeneutic manual. He

38 Weemse, Exercitations, in Works [1636], vol. 3, p. 128.

39 Weemse, Synagogue, in Works [1636], vol. 1, p. 52.

40 Calvin, Commentary, on Hebrews 11:21.

41 Lively, Annotations in quinque priores ex minoribus Prophetis, Dan. 9:24-25.

acknowledged that Genesis 1:20 should be read with an accent *Atnach* (א) after “creeping things,” in order to distinguish the fowls from the creeping things: יָרָצָא הָּעָרַיִם פֶּעֶם יָכְלֶם

הָאָרָא הַעָרָיִם פֶּעֶם יָכְלֶם, “Let the waters bring forth abundantly every creeping things: and let the fowls fly upon the earth.” Weemse pointed out that the Vulgate translation did not mark the accent mark *Atnach* and translated as if the fowls also were created from the water.\(^{43}\)

The debate on the number and order of the laws of the Decalogue was related to the use of Hebrew accent marks. On these issues there were divisions, on the one hand, between the Jews and Christians and, on the other hand, among Christians themselves. Some Rabbis took “I am the Lord thy God” (Ex. 20:2) as the first Commandment, thinking that the people of God should first know the object of their worship. Other Rabbis made an even division between the two Tables, five to the first and the other five to the second, because they thought Ps. 82:6, which reads “I have said, ye are Gods,” provided ground for including the fifth Commandment in the first Table. Catholics arranged it in a different manner. They combined the first and the second commandments into one and divided the last into two, thus maintaining the Ten Commandments. Weemse attempted to reinforce the Protestant position with a study of Hebrew pointing. He knew that there were four accent marks: *Tippha*, the least powerful;

---

\(^{43}\) Weemse, *Synagogue*, in *Works* [1636], vol. 1, p. 50.
Rebhiah and Zackephkaton, corresponding to the modern comma; Atnach, corresponding to a colon, “distinguishing the whole member of a verse, and yet continued;” Silluk, signifying a full stop. The Hebrew sometimes put both Atnach and Silluk together in the same syllable in order to express a peculiar relationship among the Commandments.44

The commands, as they are distinguished, so there is a full point, to make the distinction; but because there is a great affinity amongst them, therefore it is also that they are lightly distinguished.45

Thus, the seventh and the eighth commandments are separated by both a light stop (Atnach) and a full stop (Silluk). The same is true between the first and second, and between the eighth and ninth. The first and the second are fully and lightly distinguished because they are separate Commandments but closely related in content. But the two sentences of the last Commandment, namely, “you shall not covet your neighbor’s house” and “you shall not covet your neighbor’s wife” are distinguished with only a light stop mark, Atnach. This light stop mark shows us, said Weemse, that “they are but one commandment.”46 Though the two sentences are distinguished by a note of separation, 0,

---

44 Weemse, Moral Law II, in Works [1636], vol. 2, pp. 343-45.

45 Weemse, Synagogue, in Works [1636], vol. 1, p. 57; Cf. similar arguments of Willet, Hexapla in Exodum, “The explanations of difficult questions,” p. 309; Andrewes, Morall Law, p. 105; Jeremy Taylor, A Discourse upon that Part of the Decalogue, in Works [1828], vol. 3, pp. 1-49. Though Willet, Andrewes, and Taylor argued for the same Protestant doctrine of Weemse, they appealed mostly to dogmatic arguments rather than making appeal to philological scholarship. Andrewes only briefly mentioned for the reason why the tenth Commandment is but one Commandments, though it is composed of more than one phrase: “Because there is but one period” in p. 845.

46 Weemse, Moral Law II, in Works [1636], vol. 2, pp. 343-46; idem., Synagogue, in Works [1636], vol. 1, pp. 56-57; Cf. Ainsworth on the separation of the commandment in his Annotations, on Deut. 6.
as his Catholic opponents claimed, the note of separation does not mean a full separation, but a light stop. "These Samechs or Semuchoth make not so great a distinction as when they are distinguished by three great PPP [ססס]: for there is some coherence (when they are distinguished by Samech) with that which goeth before."\(^47\)

Who wrote the Law on the stone tablets? God or Moses? Weemse, relying on his view of the accents, translated Exodus 34:28 "that Moses was with the Lord forty dayes and forty nights, hee did neither eate bread nor drinke water: and he wrote upon the Tables, the words of the covenant, the ten Commandements."\(^48\) The subject who neither ate nor drank was Moses. This sentence is to be distinguished from the following part by the point Atnach. Thus, the subject who wrote upon tables is not Moses, but God himself. This translation is supported by Exodus 34:1.\(^49\)

In the section in which Weemse dealt with the third Commandment, he discussed the title and attribute of God, Aph-hu. This word is found in II Kings 2:14 which Weemse translated: "and he [Elisha] tooke the mantle of Elijah that fell from him, and smote the waters, and sayd, Where is the Lord God of Elijah Aphhu." The question raised in this context is whether this word, Aph-hu, should be joined to the words going before or words following. Some put the words to the following, meaning that he, to wit,

---

\(^47\) Weemse, Exercitations, in Works [1636], vol. 3, p. 173.

\(^48\) Cf. Ainsworth has the same conclusion, but with no reference to the accent in his Annotations, on Ex. 34:28.

Elijah himself smote the water. For Weemse, the right reading is that Aph-hu belongs to the words going before. He had two reasons for this choice. First, the words אֶלֶה are joined together by the euphonic accent Maqqeph, which “sheweth them to be but one word.” Second, there is a point Pesik after the words which signify a separation between these words and the words following. What is the function of the words אֶלֶה in this sentence? “They are to be read as a prayer, Elisha calling upon the God of Elijah by his title and attribute Aph-hu.” Weemse witnessed the Jews using Aph-hu when they prayed to God. “Accept of my petition, O Lord God of Elijah Aph-hu. Aph-hu that was before the world was made, and ... Aph-hu by whom the world was made.”

Weemse found a geographical problem in II Samuel 8:13. It reads “and David got him a name when he returned from smiting the Syrians in the valley of salt, being eightene thousand men.” The problem is that there was a great distance between the valley of salt and Syria. Weemse resolved this problem by the Hebrew point Tarcha. The text should be read, said Weemse, “he got him a name when hee returned from Syria.” After this part is distinguished by accent Tarcha, then follows “he slew the eightene thousand men in the valley of salt.”

---


3. Collation of Scripture with Scripture

While the right pointing of the Hebrew text is “a most necessary helpe” for understanding Scripture and while the marginal reading could be used as illustration of the line reading, said Weemse, collation of Scripture with Scripture is “a most profitable help to bring us to the sense of the Scripture.” For collation among Scriptural books, along with their translation, provides practical help for the reader to attain the right sense of the Holy Spirit.

Collation within Scripture is possible because of the basic conviction of the doctrine of Scripture that the author of Scripture is the Holy Spirit and that Scripture should be interpreted in light of the intention of the same Spirit. It is also based on the traditional understanding of an undefiled harmony and coherence of Scripture. Weemse said, recalling Epiphanius, “although at the first, there seeme some contradiction in the holy Scriptures, yet when we looke nearer and nearer unto them, wee shall finde no contrarietie in them, but a perfect harmonie... When wee see any appearance of contradiction in the Scriptures, we should labour to reconcile them.” In another place Weemse emphasized the perfect coherence of Scripture: “All things in the Scriptures are fitly joyned and coupled together... the Scriptures of God which have such a dependance and connexion, that if yee take away but one verse, the whole shall be marred;” and:

52 Weemse, Synagoge, in Works [1636], vol. 1, p. 57.
53 Weemse, Exercitations, in Works [1636], vol. 3, p. 81.
54 Weemse, Exercitations, in Works [1636], vol. 3, p. 106.
"The two Testaments are Gods two Silver Trumpets, and his two lips, as it were, breathing out one truth."\(^{55}\)

For collation within Scripture Weemse appealed to the Jewish tradition of collation of Scripture which the Apostles of Christ followed. When Antiochus Epiphanes forbade reading the five books of Moses, Jews divided the Law into 52 equal sections and joined them with corresponding sections of the Prophets. The sections of the Law were called *Parascha* and the sections of the Prophets *Haphtarah*. The corresponding sections of the Law and Prophets were read in a year. Thus, they read Isaiah 42:5-43:11, the portion that begins with "So saith the Lord Creator of heaven and earth" instead of the *Parascha* called *Peturah beresith* which is the first section of Genesis.\(^{56}\)

What is the purpose of collation within Scripture? When the Apostles cited the Old Testament in the New, it was not because they needed confirmation of the Old for their doctrines, but for the benefit of the present readers. Perkins in a similar tone said that "the collation or comparing of places together, is... that the meaning of them may more evidentely appeare."\(^{57}\) Thus, in order to illustrate their doctrines for the benefit of the readers sometimes the New Testament writers made some changes to the Hebrew text in their citation. They either changed, added, or omitted words of the Hebrew text. They

---

\(^{55}\) Weemse, *Synagogue*, in *Works* [1636], vol. 1, p. 60.


\(^{57}\) Perkins, *Art of Prophecying*, in *Works* [1609], vol. 2, p. 738; See also Ainsworth, "Preface," in *Annotations*. 
added expository notes, clarified the Hebrew text with discerning notes, limiting remarks, or application notes. 58 An example of discerning notes is from Micah 5:2. It reads "But thou Bethlehem Ephrata, art the least of the Rulers of Iudah, out of thee shall come forth to me, who shall be Ruler in Israel." But Matthew made a slight change of the text to make his point clearer in Matthew 2:6: "and thou shalt not be the least". Here Matthew expressly said what Micah hinted--"out of thee shall come he who shall not be the least." 59

Paul, similarly, altered the Hebrew of Psalms 68:18 "he ascended up on high and received gifts" to "he ascended up on high and gave gifts" in Ephesians 4:8. Here Paul illustrates the idea that all the gifts that Christ received, he received in order that he might bestow them on his church. 60 The fifth commandment in Exodus and Deuteronomy has a phrase "in the land, which the Lord thy God giveth thee." Paul dropped it in Ephesians 6:3, "which the Lord thy God giveth thee," because Christians are not going to dwell in Canaan again. 61

Weemse argues that the Holy Spirit inspired the change to the Hebrew text made by the New Testament writers. When the Apostles cited the Hebrew text, "they were not


translators; and therefore they are not bound to the words, but may adde or paire: and … they give the full sense.” In fact, the Apostles followed the translation of the Septuagint rather than the original Hebrew text.\footnote{Weemse, \textit{Synagogue}, in \textit{Works} [1636], vol. 1, pp. 72-76.}

Weemse used categories when he explained the collation between the Old and New Testaments. They are either in phrase, in type and things signified, or in type with antitype. The subject of typological interpretation is dealt with when Weemse discusses the sense of Scripture. On the subject of collation Weemse mentioned only matching texts to draw valid doctrines. “Of phrases not rightly matched, nothing is concluded.”\footnote{Weemse, \textit{Synagogue}, in \textit{Works} [1636], vol. 1, p. 63.}

In other words, valid doctrines must be drawn from a proper collation of Scripture. In his examination of the first example of collation of phrase Weemse points to the interpretive error of the doctrine of transubstantiation. Moses’s words “this is the blood of the Covenant” and Christ’s words “this is my blood” are not well matched, since the blood in the former is said in a proper sense, while the latter in a remote sense. In other words, the blood in the former is real blood, while the latter is the “sacrament of his blood.” Therefore, a doctrine that is based on the false equation of the two phrases is not a valid conclusion.\footnote{Weemse, \textit{Exercitations}, in \textit{Works} [1636], vol. 3, p. 180; Weemse, \textit{Synagogue}, in \textit{Works} [1636], vol. 1, p. 63.} Weemse also pointed out the Jesuit error of comparing Judges 13:15
“prepare a young goat” with 1 Corinthians 11:25 “do this” in order to justify the Catholic conception of sacrament in the mass.\(^{65}\)

For examples of prophecies and their fulfillment Weemse drew on the Talmud, various ancient sources like Josephus, Eusebius, and Alexander of Alexandria,\(^{66}\) and the works of his own contemporaries, notably Cunaeus and Scaliger.\(^{67}\) For the fulfillment of Genesis 49:10 “the scepter shall not depart from Juda till Shilo come” Weemse appealed to Josephus and said that until Christ was born the scepter was not taken away from Judea. It was taken away only when Herod killed the members of the Sanhedrin and took the government to himself.\(^{68}\)

When an Old Testament prophecy is matched with a wrong event, there arises a fallacious doctrine. Here Weemse opposed the excessive use of typological exegesis. Applying “and he shall enter into Egypt, and the Idols shall fall before him” of Isaiah 19 to Christ, said Weemse, is a fault “that strained the prophecies too much, in applying them to Christ.” Another example of a false match of prophecy and its fulfillment is Malachi 1:11—“and there shall be a cleane offering offered to the Lord in all places.” The Papists applied this text to their mass. Weemse applied it to spiritual worship of all believers.

\(^{65}\) Weemse, *Synagoge*, in *Works* [1636], vol. 1, pp. 63-64.

\(^{66}\) Eusebius, *Vita Constiantini*. Weemse does not specify works of Josephus and Alexander.


\(^{68}\) Weemse, *Synagoge*, in *Works* [1636], vol. 1, pp. 64-67.
For all the faithfull (who are a royal Priesthood to God) offers this spiritual offering to the Lord. The Prophet speaking of the spiritual worship of the Gospel, expresses it often by the ceremonies of the Law... they mention the burnt offerings, the sheepe of Kedar, the rammes of Nebayoth, and to go to Ierusalem.\footnote{Weemse, Synagogue, in Works [1636], vol. 1, p. 67.}

Similarly, Jews made a mistake in collating 1 Kings 4:30 and Isaiah 2:26 and said that Solomon was “skilfull in Magicke.”\footnote{Weemse, Synagogue, in Works [1636], vol. 1, p. 269.}

One of the most misunderstood places in Scripture, said Weemse, is Christ’s declaration in Matthew 5:39 “resist no evil, but whossoever shall smite thee on the right cheeke, turne to him the other also.” What Christ wants to communicate here is not meant literally; it is that Christians should be patient when suffering injuries. For this injunction of Christ should be balanced with others in Scripture, such as 2 Corinthians 8:13—“for I meane not that other men be eased, and ye burdened.” Therefore, the things Christians are to suffer are not unlimited, but only light injuries “such as are a boxe, or a blow, or loosing of a coat or cloak.” If a man should take all that a Christian has, as Julian the Apostate understood, then the Christian is to resist him. In order to attain the right sense of this text, Weemse matched Lamentations 3:30 “he giveth his cheekees to him that smitteth him” and Christ’s action when he was smitten in John 18:23. Christ did not hold up the other cheek, but asked “why smitest thou me?” The intended meaning, consequently, is not to be taken literally, but that “we should carrie a Christian heart, ready to forgive, and not to prosecute all injuries, and to remit something of our own right
at sometimes for the Gospels sake.” Weemse supported this with the schoolmen’s maxim that Christian virtue does not lie in rigid or “mathematical” virtue but rather habet suam latitudinem.\textsuperscript{71}

4. Translation of Scripture

Although Weemse enjoined the preachers to read Scripture in its original languages, he considered translation a profitable help to reach to the right understanding of Scripture. Translation is one of the “three speciall meanes” that make Scripture “plaine unto us,” along with paraphrasing and interpretation of Scripture.\textsuperscript{72} Translation is authentic and profitable as far as it is made properly out of the original languages. Consequently, the authority of translation is drawn out of the original text. Thus, said Weemse, translation is only secondarily authentic. “A Translation is authentick, in so farre as it agrees with the originall.”\textsuperscript{73}

In the section on the third Commandment Weemse dealt with the question of Jephthah’s vow and said that Jephthah made a rash vow out of ignorance of the law of God. When a man made a rash vow, Weemse said appealing to Drusius, the vow could

\textsuperscript{71} Weemse, \textit{Moral Law II}, in \textit{Works} [1636], vol. 2, pp. 118-19.

\textsuperscript{72} Weemse, \textit{Exercitations}, in \textit{Works} [1636], vol. 3, p. 131; For the four uses and benefits of translation according to Walton see his \textit{Considerator}, pp. 92-94. There Walton illustrated (1) translation conveys the “living waters of salvation form the fountains to every particular nation and people; (2) God so wonderfully preserves the translations; (3) they “bear witness to the integrity of the Original Texts;” and (4) they “serve as so many glasses to declare the true sense and meaning of the Scripture.”

\textsuperscript{73} Weemse, \textit{Synagogue}, in \textit{Works} [1636], vol. 1, p. 68; Cf., the typical orthodox view, as discussed in Muller, \textit{PRRD}, II:451-56.
be annulled by his superior according to the Jewish custom. But despite the rash vow
God worked with his vow and bestowed him victory. This conclusion is reflected in
Weemse’s translation of the text.74

In relation to Jephthah’s vow, Weemse asked a question, whether the two phrases
“whatever comes out of the door of my house to meet me when I return in triumph from
the Ammonites will be the Lord’s” and “and I will sacrifice it as a burnt offering” should
be connected with copulative or disjunctive waw (Judges 11:31). Piscator, for example,
read the two phrases with a disjunctive waw and understood that Jephthah promised to
consecrate to the Lord two different things. The first part he understood to include
whatever Jephthah met, whether it was a dog or an ass, but which was unfit for sacrifice
and thus might be redeemed by the law. This is why Jephthah added in the later part of
his vow, “I shall offer it in a burnt offering,” understanding if it be a creature fit for
sacrifice. Weemse understood the text with a copulative waw, for he thought one part is
included in another part. In this text, the words “what is the Lord’s” indicates the clause
“I will sacrifice it as a burnt offering.” Other examples of such copulative waw are “he
who curseth his father, or his mother” (Exodus 21:17) and “hee who toucheth this man or
his wife” (Genesis 26:11). Thus, said Weemse, the text should be translated as “So it
shall surely be the Lord’s [and] I will offer it in a burnt offering” and not “or I will offer
it.”75

74 Weemse, Moral Law I, in Works [1636], vol. 2, pp. 182-83.
75 Weemse, Moral Law I, in Works [1636], vol. 2, pp. 185-86.
The second question Weemse dealt with in this text is whether Jephthah actually sacrificed his daughter as a burnt offering or not. The answer to this question hinges on the translation of ṭαῶ, “to lament” in verse 40 “the daughters of Israel went out yearly to lament her.” The Septuagint translated it with ὀρέων and Aramaic Paraphrase with יָדַע, both meaning “to lament.” These translators, said Weemse, wrongly derived the word from יָדַע, “to mourn.” But the word is actually from יָדַע, “to narrate.” Thus, the text should be translated as “to comfort her.” Pagninus translated it “ad colloquendum.” Arias Montanus, a Hebrew gloss, Kimchi, and Junius had similar translations. 76

Weemse suggested ten principles that a translator should observe in translating Scripture. 77 The most important and basic principle is that “a translator must observe Ex quo vertit & in quod vertit, or Terminus a quo & terminus ad quem, and he must consider first the sense, and then the words.” 78 Since what is most important for translation is sense and not word, a translator should not merely translate word by word. Weemse’s view of translation was primarily pastoral. Rather than strictly observing linguistic boundaries, he rendered translation close to paraphrase. Weemse appealed to the

---


77 For similar rules for translation from the original Hebrew see Fulke, A Defence, pp. 99-100, 217-18; Broughton, “Epistle to the Nobility,” in Works [1662], pp. 558-72.

78 Weemse, Exercitations, in Works [1636], vol. 3, p. 133.
authority of Thomas Aquinas, "we must not so much respect the originall, exact, and precise signification of words, as whereunto by use and speech they are applyed." This pastoral type of translation was also popular among the Protestants such as Luther and Bucer.\(^79\) For example, Genesis 22:17 reads "I will multiply thy seede as the sand upon the lippe of the sea." The phrase וְיָכְלָה יָקְנָה ("the lip of the sea"), said Weemse, must be translated according to the aptness of the given language—"in English, "upon the sea shore."\(^80\)

The second principle is a logical extension of the first principle. It says that a translation may add words, if clarification and illustration are needed, insofar as they do not hurt the sense of the text. Since authenticity of translation draws on the sense of the original text, the best type of translation for Weemse is not a wooden literal translation, but a working translation so that people could understand the text in their vernacular tongue. Weemse's preference for the illustrative type of translation explains his focus on practical preaching and teaching for the church. He pointed to a biblical example of practical translation. Paul added illustrative remarks when he cited and translated a text from Deuteronomy: "Cursed be hee that confirmeth not all the words of this Law to doe them," (Deut. 27:26); "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the booke of the Law to doe them," (Gal. 3:10). So the text of 2 Samuel 6:6

---


“Vzzia put forth to the Arke” is expounded by 1 Chronicles 13:9 “he put forth his hand to the Arke.”81

After Weemse illustrated his preference for illustrative translation, he quickly added caveats against false translations that are made by adding foreign words to the text. A translator must not add anything of his own or rhetorical flourishes in his translation. To the text of Genesis 4:11, the Latin translation wrongly added “let us go forth,” the Samaritan copy supplied “let us goe to the field,” and Targum Jerusalem added a long conversation between Cain and Abel, while the Hebrew text does not have it.82

The fourth principle states that words that are transient and received in all languages should not be translated. Examples of such words are Sabbath, Amen, Halleluia, Hosanna, and so on.83 Weemse translated Leviticus 23:15 “and you shall count unto you from the morrow after the Sabbath, from the day that ye brought the sheafe of the wave offering: seven weekes shall be complete.”84 In the Hebrew text the word ḥēṣ appear twice. The first one is not translated; but the second one is translated “week.” It is because the word ḥēṣ has two meanings—when it means Sabbath, it is not translated; but when it means “a whole week,” it is translated. When Sabbath is affixed with demonstrative ה, it is distinguished from the other Sabbath. ḥēṣ is called ḥēṣ ḥēṣ, “a

82 Weemse, Exercitations, in Works [1636], vol. 3, pp. 134-35; Synagogue, in Works [1636], vol. 1, p. 82.
83 Weemse, Exercitations, in Works [1636], vol. 3, p. 135; Synagogue, in Works [1636], vol. 1, p. 78.
84 Weemse, Moral Law I, in Works [1636], vol. 2, p. 197, emphasis mine.
Sabbath of Sabbath,” as in Exodus 31:15. The word Raca was not translated in the New Testament from the Hebrew and Syriac. For the word was commonly used by the Jews and there was no fit word for translation.

Fifthly, words that are appropriate should not be translated to any other use, but for the use the text intended. The word ἡμι in Ecclesiastes 2:5 should not be translated “I planted paradise,” for the “paradise” there means an orchard. Similarly νηστεύω ἃ τοῦ σαββάτου in Luke 18:12 should not be translated “I fast twice on the Sabbath.” For σαββάτου is a word appropriate to the Sabbath day, but here it means week. The sixth rule is that degenerate words should not be used in translation—a rule that Weemse drew out of the masoretic tradition. “Idiot” in 1 Corinthians 14:16 must be translated into “unlearned.” Μάγος should not be translated into “magicians,” for it is degenerate word in English. It would rather be translated into “wise man.” So God is not called “Baal,” but “Lord.”

The seventh rule is that proper names should not be translated into appellative or vice versa. “Thou art Peter” of Matthew 16:18 should not be translated as “thou art a rock,” for Peter is a proper name. Ἰσχρά of Joshua 14:15 should not be translated as

---

86 Weemse, Moral Law II, in Works [1636], vol. 2, pp. 93-94.
87 Weemse, Exercitations, in Works [1636], vol. 3, pp. 136-37; Synagogue, in Works [1636], vol. 1, p. 78.
88 Weemse, Exercitations, in Works [1636], vol. 3, p. 137; Synagogue, in Works [1636], vol. 1, p. 79.
“Adam,” for it is an appellative and not a proper name, as indicated by the article he.\textsuperscript{89} The eighth principle is that a translator should take heed when he translates words that have double meaning or words that turn to one of the extremes. דֶּרֶך may mean both “wise” and “crafty.” The text of Genesis 3:1 “the Serpent was דֶּרֶך should be translated to “crafty” or “subtile” rather than “wisest.” So פָּרָש may mean either grave or hell. Some words have a contrary sense. “Bless God and die” in Job actually means “curse God.”\textsuperscript{90} The ninth principle is an injunction to take heed when one translates words for which there are no proper words in the host language. For example, ζεζάνα of Matthew 13:25 should not be translated “tares” or “fitches.” For while tares and fitches can be discerned from the good corn, ζεζάνα cannot be discerned. Thus, when we hear “his enemy came and sowed tares,” we should understand “the enemy corrupted that seede which seemed to be good seede.”\textsuperscript{91}

The tenth principle states that a translator should labor to keep the proper phrase of the language being translated. Since a biblical translator deals with several tongues of the Bible, he should be well equipped with linguistic knowledge of the Bible. Sin in Syrian language is debt, sinner debtor. Matthew followed the Syriac manner of calling sin debt (ὀφείληματα), while Luke followed the Greek manner of calling it transgression (ἀμαρτίας). The Hebrew phrase “when you break your bread” means in the Syriac

\textsuperscript{89} Weemse, Exercitations, in Works [1636], vol. 3, pp. 137-38; Synagogue, in Works [1636], vol. 1, p. 79.

\textsuperscript{90} Weemse, Exercitations, in Works [1636], vol. 3, p. 138; Synagogue, in Works [1636], vol. 1, p. 81.

\textsuperscript{91} Weemse, Exercitations, in Works [1636], vol. 3, p. 139.
“when you do justice,” and in English “when you give your alms.” Ecclesiasticus 20:16 has a phrase “a man with the third tongue stirred up many.” A man with three tongues, in Aramaic language, is a man who “stings three at once,” namely himself, him to whom, and him of whom.92

When a child was circumcised under the Law, he was called כַּפַּן, or sponsus in Latin, because “hee was married to the covenant.” Onkelos paraphrased it “thou art a bloody husband to mee.” Thus, when Zipporah said “surely you are a bridegroom of blood to me,” she did not say it to Moses but to her child who was circumcised. Hhatan in Hebrew signifies bridegroom; hhatan in Arabic means circumcision.93

Biblical translation should fit the sense of Scripture. Any translation that does not correspond to the sense of Scripture is a faulty translation. Weemse illustrated six cases of faulty translation. First, translation is servile when it is bound word by word to the text. μὴ ἔχων σπέρμα is better translated by Luke as “having no children” than “having no seede” as in Matthew 22:25. Secondly, translation should not be luxurious, for otherwise translation is replaced by paraphrase. It must not be barbarous or contentious. Translation must not affect newness of words, as Castilio translated angel to genius, baptizare to indundere, and church to Republica. Translation should not be malicious.

92 Weemse, Synagogue, in Works [1636], vol. 1, p. 84.
93 Weemse, Moral Law II, in Works [1636], vol. 2, pp. 52-53.
Aquila, in order to disgrace Christ, translated “behold a virgin shall bear a son” (Isaiah 7:14) to “behold a woman shall beare a νέονς Sonne.”

Weemse’s philological study regarding biblical translation had a special interest in the Septuagint and Latin Vulgate. Weemse had a high regard for the Septuagint, for it was used by the Lord to call the Gentiles under his special providence. More than that, the New Testament writers followed it in most places when citing the Hebrew text. It must have universal authority over other translations. Thus, the church has placed it next to the Scripture itself. However, even with the special providence of God upon it, the translation of the Septuagint was not immediately inspired by the Spirit.

As Josephus and the Babylonian Talmud testified, said Weemse, there are at least thirteen places where the Septuagint altered the text in translation. For example, the Septuagint translated Deuteronomy 32:8, לְמַעַרְבָּה בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל (“according to the number of the sons of Israel”) to “according to the number of the angels of God,” in order not to offend the heathen and to make Israel equivalent to all the people of the world. Similarly it translated Exodus 4:20, נִקְאַת מָשָׁא אֲדָם מֵאָדָם וְאֵין נבֵּעָה עַל הָעָלָה (“Moses took his wife and his two sons and set them upon an ass” to “... upon that which was under the yoke.”) For only a beggar rode an ass in the culture of the king Ptolomy. The Septuagint added hundreds of years to the number of years of the patristic Fathers of Israel in order to make them match the remarkable years of the Egyptians. Similarly, it added three or four

---

94 Weemse, *Synagogue*, in *Works* [1636], vol. 1, pp. 75-78.

verses which are not in the Hebrew original to the end of Job. Sometimes the Seventy differed from the Hebrew text, because the translators followed the Syriac language which was popular in those days. For example, while רַע in Hebrew means plague, it means death in Syriac language. The Seventy followed the Syriac meaning and translated it into death in II Samuel 24:15.\(^6\)

The Septuagint added in Exodus 24:11a phrase which is not in the Hebrew text. The added part is “of the chosen men of Israel none of them did disagree.” Following Scaliger’s argument, Weemse said that the God-given authority of the seventy elders of Moses’ time, “they applyed it to these Seventy who were sent to Aegypt in the dayes of Ptolemeus” to translate the Hebrew Bible into Greek. By mis-applying the authority of the seventy elders, the Septuagint misinterpreted the word διαφωτισμός by saying that of the seventy translators “none of them did disagree” in their translations, while the original Hebrew reads “none of them did die.”\(^7\)

Since the Septuagint is a translation, even with the special providence of God working on it, the authority of the Seventy is secondary to the original Hebrew text, only when it corresponds to the original text. “Therefore we are not to paralell the Hebrew Text and the translation of the Seventy, but where the holy Ghost hath paralled them.”\(^8\)

---

\(^6\) Weemse, Synagoge, in Works [1636], vol. 1, pp. 69-74.

\(^7\) Weemse, Exercitationes, in Works [1636], vol. 3, pp. 146-47.

\(^8\) Weemse, Exercitationes, in Works [1636], vol. 3, p. 148.
Paraphrases of the Hebrew Bible are Targum Jonathan, which is the
paraphrase of the Prophets, Targum Onkelos and Targum Hierosolymitanum on the five
books of Moses, and the Targum of Rabbi Joseph Cacus on the writings. Like
translations, the paraphrases must correspond to the sense of Scripture. If a paraphrase is
against the doctrine of Christ or if its style is so luxurious that it adds foreign meaning to
the text, it must be rejected. Weemse’s attitude towards the Jewish literature is both
negative and positive, depending on whether they support his Christian cause.

Weemse’s Christian bias is well expressed in his critique of the Jewish paraphrase
of the Hebrew Bible. Song of Songs 4:5 reads “thy two breasts are like two young
Roes.” Targum paraphrased “the two young Roes” as two Messiahs, one of whom is the
poor son of Joseph and the other the son of the mighty David. This is, said Weemse, a
blasphemous paraphrase and should be rejected. Again, Targum paraphrased Job 23:9 as
follows: “Michael is upon his right hand, and Gabriel upon his left hand, Michael is upon
his right hand, and he is fire; and Gabriel is upon his left hand, and he is water; and the
holy creatures are partly fire and partly water.” Weemse said that this paraphrase is
blasphemous, because it made the Son of God a creature and matched him with Gabriel
and Michael.99

But when paraphrases clarify the sense of a given biblical text, said Weemse, “we
are to make use of them.” Onkelos properly paraphrased Genesis 2:24 “he shall leave

father and mother, and cleave unto his wife” within the Jewish custom. According to 
Jewish custom, children lay in their father’s chamber before they got married. Onkelos 
said that when a man is getting married, he shall leave *Domum cubilis*, house of [his] bed.
This also illustrates the meaning of Luke 11:7 “my children are with me in bed.”
Weemse’s next example shows his occasional leaning toward allegorical interpretation.
Genesis 49:27 reads “Benjamin is a ravenous wolf, in the morning he devours the prey, in 
the evening he divides the plunder.” Weemse agreed with a paraphrase which reads as 
follows: “in his possession shall the Sanctuary bee built, morning and evening shall the 
Priests offer their offerings; and in the evening shall they divide the rest of the portion 
which is left of the sanctified things.”

From false translation a false doctrine develops. The Pharisees translated “love 
thy neighbour as thy selfe” into “him who was a friend onely.” This translation easily 
implies that they might hate their enemies. Paul rightly translated the text, “thou shalt 
love thy neighbour” with τὸν ἐτέρων which means “any man whatsoever he is.”
Bellarmine translated Genesis 23:3 “Abraham rose from the office of the dead,” 
following the Latin translation and neglecting the original Hebrew text. From this

---

reading he gathered the doctrine of purgatory, because by the word *officium* he mistakenly understood “doing offices to the dead.”

In the section on the tenth Commandment, Weemse deals with the doctrine of sin. The main question he took issue with the Catholics was what it is that the tenth Commandment condemns. Is it all evil dispositions in one’s heart or, as Catholics taught, is it only the full consent of reason to evil desire, while its first abstraction in heart is not condemned? In the medieval schools, sin was distinguished into three different movements in the heart: *primo-primi motus* (most original motion in the heart), *secundo-primi motus* (original-secondary motion), and *secundi motus* (secondary motion). Given that both Protestants and Catholics agreed on the *secundi motus*, the issue is how to understand the first two in relation to biblical exegesis. According to Weemse, the Catholic teaching on the *primo-primi motus* is that it is “neither mortall nor veniall.” It is because they come from natural human disposition, over which humans do not have control. “They arise before the consideration of reason, and the will cannot repress them because they proceed from our naturall disposition.” The *secundo-primi motus* is venial, because humans express some merit in resisting the primary movement of concupiscence in the heart and fight against it. Therefore humans are rather to be praised than to be punished. Thus, what the tenth Commandment condemns, according to


Catholic interpretation, is the kind of sin to which humans give full consent with their reason and will. Thus, only *secundi motus* is moral sin and while *secundo-primi motus* is venial sin, *primo-primi motus* is not sin. In other words, the full consent to evil desire is mortal sin, simple delight in evil is venial sin, and abstraction of evil desire is not sin.

The different interpretations of sin hinge on the exegesis of Genesis 8:21 which reads “I will not curse the ground any more for man’s sake, *even though the heart of man is prone to evill even from his Youthhead.*” Phygius the Catholic argued from this text that “that for which God spareth a man is not sinne, but God spareth a man for the thoughts of his heart, therefore they are not sinne in themselves, for that which is sinne in itselfe, provoketh the Lord more to anger still.”

The basis on which Phygius made this conclusion is the Vulgate translation. He translated the word כ “because,” while Weemse said it should be translated as “even though.” With כ as “even though,” the text should mean, according to Weemse, “although the cogitations of his heart be evill, and I might be justly angry with him, both for his originall and actuall sins, and destroy him, as I did in the deluge, yet in my mercy, I will not doe this to him.” The Catholics translated כ as *prona in malum* (leaning toward evil), while it should mean “altogether evill.” Again, they translated מַטְפֵּר to *ab adolescentia* (from childhood), while its correct meaning, said Weemse, is “as soone as he stirreth in his mothers belly.”

---

In this way the Latin Vulgate translated this text to the effect that only the actual imagination of the heart is evil, and only that kind of sin is condemned by God in the tenth Commandment. This translation led to an important theological problem for the Protestants. For it clearly implied that humans have clear choices—either to choose virtue or to choose concupiscence. It is man’s choice “as though there were some power in him to concurre with God; but this word יְָּיֵּר taketh away all this.”

5. Conclusion

Weemse’s introduction of masoretic study to the general hermeneutics of early seventeenth-century England orthodoxy made possible a significant advance in its understanding of Scripture. As he was fully aware of the benefits of those new “helps” that he explained in five sections, four sections in this chapter and the fifth section in the next chapter, the philological study of the Hebrew text brought in a new level of understanding Scripture. While many of the previous and contemporary theologians of his day appealed to dogmatic orientation for the doctrine of Scripture and its exegesis, Weemse introduced highly scholarly tools for reading the masoretic text in orthodox theology.

The seventeenth-century orthodox biblical philology and exegesis, however, are characterized by its using the tools for churchly preaching and teaching. Its biblical


108 Muller, PRRD, II:542; Manuel, Broken Staff, pp. 4, 7-8; Katchen, Christian Hebraists, pp. 12-13.
study adopted more critical and more philological tools than before, but they were employed for practical use in the churchly setting. This practical approach of biblical study was widespread in the early part of the century as illustrated by Robert Bolton:

> We must labour and be sure that we draw out knowledge in God's Word into practice, action, and exercise; otherwise, it will not onely be unprofitable and unfruitful unto us, but indeed bring upon us a greater and more fearfull condemnation.\(^{109}\)

Thus, the advance made in early seventeenth-century orthodox biblical studies must be qualified in terms of the given hermeneutical situation of the period and in terms of the purpose of employing the more critical tools of reading. Within this churchly theological orientation, Scripture was understood in a pre-modern sense with the result that textual criticism did not lead to historical criticism as in later centuries. When the orthodox read Scripture they expected to hear the meaning of the Holy Spirit through the "voice" of the Lord. They had a firm conviction that the author and interpreter of the Scriptural books is the Spirit of God. It must be very clear for a proper understanding of the orthodox biblical studies that their hermeneutical mind was still firmly rooted in the traditional understanding of Scripture. The emerging tools of biblical philology and exegesis were directed and used for the pre-critical program of orthodox theology, and not yet for an objectively determined scientific purpose.

The early orthodox biblical study is a result of the long, but in retrospect somewhat uneasy fusion between Reformational theology and humanistic orientation

---

toward ancient literature. It was a time of a fusion of older theological predispositions and new methodological discipline. It is interesting to find that Weemse used the best available text critical apparatus of his day even with the theological assumption of biblical inspiration on the analogy of dictation. The fusion was not always or in all places stable. Most of the church theologians of Weemse’s day sided with the theologically determined opinion of the Buxtorfs, while some, such as Louis Cappel, broke the fusion of a traditional religious inclination and new methods of biblical discipline and suggested a more scientific reading of Scripture.\textsuperscript{110}

The rather unstable fusion of the new biblical discipline and the old religious inclination is also found in Weemse. First of all, his rather striking view, compared to his contemporary orthodox theologians, of the Hebrew vowel-points seems not to be incompatible with his use of new biblical disciplines for the theologically orthodox cause. Weemse did not believe Cappel's position that the vowel-points were added later with the purpose of preserving the original pronunciation and meaning of the Hebrew reading was unstable theologically, while the Buxtorfs did. On this point Weemse was more modern and less dominated by dogmatic orientation than Lightfoot whose approach to the Hebrew Bible and rabbinic writings was “totally uncritical.”\textsuperscript{111} However, Weemse himself was a son of the unstable fusion of the seventeenth century. For even on the same subject he found himself, like other orthodox theologians, following the traditional


\textsuperscript{111} Schertz, “Christian Hebraism,” pp. 13-14, 57, 82.
theological inclination—he believed that the Hebrew language was the “proto-
tongue” of all human languages. He in fact used this line of thought to argue for the late
invention of the Hebrew vowel-points. Weemse also found himself somewhat torn
between his own Protestant orthodoxy and use of rabbinic studies. He inclined to the
rabbinic tradition that the Masoretes changed some rough expressions of the text into
more modest expressions and put them in the margin. This alteration of words in the
margin did not challenge his theological conviction about the integrity and purity of
Scripture. Rather this conviction led him to declare the authority of both the textual
reading and the marginal reading and that the marginal reading never contradicts the
textual reading but clarifies it.

Weemse’s keen interest in biblical philology led him to use Jewish sources for
Christian exegesis of the Bible; at the same time his orthodoxy did not set him apart from
the traditional Reformed theology but helped him to defend it against the counter-attack
of the Roman church. To conclude, thus, without qualification that seventeenth-century
biblical philology and criticism foreshadowed the later objectivistic, historical-criticism is
mistaken. It is equally mistaken to say that hermeneutical and exegetical works of the
period were predominantly dogmatic and thus had nothing to do with the emerging text-
critical studies of Scripture. Early seventeenth century biblical philology and

112 De Jonge, “The Study of the New Testament, p. 114; Cf. with more balanced view of Muller, PRRD,
hermeneutic stood in continuity with the pre-critical and pre-modern Protestant
approach to biblical interpretation, while at the same time evidencing advances in textual
and hermeneutical studies and, in the case of a few thinkers offering hints of an historical
approach to the text.
Chapter Six

Theory and Practice:
Hebrew Custom (Fifth Help)

1. Weemse’s Attitude toward the Jews

Given that Weemse’s approach to the Hebrew Bible was heavily influenced by his study of the rabbinic tradition, his position on the Jews and Hebrew customs relates directly to his positive use of Jewish sources in the Christian exegesis of the Bible. Weemse’s passion for a better understanding of the Hebrew Bible, unlike the similar interests of other seventeenth-century Hebraists like Buxtorf and Lightfoot, led him to a more positive attitude toward the Jews and a more eclectic attitude toward using their tradition. Weemse’s positive attitude toward the Jewish biblical tradition is well illustrated by his use of rabbinic scholarship on the masoretic text of the Bible. The first part of this chapter will examine his theological attitude toward the Jews, which is illustrated by his treatise on toleration of Jews in the English Christian commonwealth and the second part will explore Weemse’s use of Hebrew religious and social customs and tradition for Christian biblical exegesis.

For our purpose the history of the Jewish community in England can be divided into two periods: the time before their expulsion in 1290 and the era of widespread religious hatred between the expulsion and their resettlement in the middle of the
seventeenth century.¹ Though some Jews continued to live secretly in England after 1290, for nearly four and a half centuries their presence in England was legally prohibited.² This explains the general nature of Christian treatises on Jews of the period while they were absent. Most of the treatises on Jews and Judaism written in the period between 1290 and the middle of the seventeenth century were not informed by first-hand experience of Jews but by polemical treatises. Many of the writings on Jews both on the continent and in the British Isles were ill-informed and characterized by either ignorance or malice.³

By way of example, Jews were portrayed by such anti-Semitic images as Barabas in Christopher Marlowe’s The Jew of Malta (1589) and Shylock in Shakespeare’s The Merchant of Venice (1598). The latter play may have capitalized on the trial and execution in 1594 of Roderigo Lopez, a Spanish Jew and physician to Queen Elizabeth who had been accused of plotting her death.⁴ This anti-Semitic image


of Jews as the murderers of Christ and evil hands in Christian society was popular from the Middle Ages through the days of the Reformation and was still alive and well on the continent and in the British Isles. Hugh Broughton, the learned English Hebraist and predecessor of Weemse, when asked by a Jew, “did not our Minister [i.e., rabbi] sing like an Angel?” replied, “No, ... he barks like a Dog.” Similar sentiments were expressed by Fairlambe who wrote in 1606 that those who opposed Calvinism “haue no more religion then Doggs, and are worse then Turks or Jewes: yea or brute beasts.” It was popular to deride Jews with such images as “doggs” or “brute beasts” or “filthy villaines.”

Even in the middle of the seventeenth century the eminent Hebraist, Lightfoot dogmatically believed that Jews’ complete moral corruption could be seen in their lascivious sexual behavior, participation to superstition and witchcraft, bent toward criminal activity, and hatred toward Christians. Attributing their corrupt behavior to their spiritual status, Lightfoot made a bold conclusion, unlike many other English Christian thinkers of his day, that the Jews had lost the favor of God not momentarily

---


but for eternity. As Oberman summarizes the general situation of the Christian society vis-à-vis the Jews, the post-Reformation image of the Jews was the by-product of the increased anti-Semitism in the Reformation period. The Reformation and post-Reformation eras were characterized by four significant anti-Semitic attitudes: "(1) the criminalisation of the Jews; (2) the polemic against usury; (3) the suspicion of baptized Jews; and (4) the charge of falsifying Holy Scripture."10

This situation would have made readmission of the Jews to England almost impossible. But the seventeenth century witnessed a changing attitude of Christian intellectuals toward the Jews, arising in part from the Christian zeal for better understanding of Scripture. The Protestant belief that Scripture is the main source of faith increased the interest in the Old Testament and the people of God in it. This interest in the Old Testament improved the Christian attitude toward Jewish culture and practice, and led to the rise of the economic and political usefulness of the Jews.11

---


However harsh the traditional image of the Jews was, the earlier part of seventeenth-century England began to witness a philo-Semitic tendency in its religious life. The English were saved from the sharp edges of popular violence against the Jewish communities that happened on the continent, Parkes argues, thanks to the English separation from the Roman church of the Continent. The English philo-Semitic tendency was closely related to the development of Puritanism and its multiplication of separatist sects. The Puritan interest in going back to the Bible and their identifying themselves with the Hebrews of the Old Testament logically fostered the thought frame that led to a positive image of the Jews and eventually to the hope of Jewish conversion. For some extremists this led to the conclusion that the Old Testament dispensation should be binding now and the institutions of the old covenant such as circumcision and seventh-day Sabbath should be observed. This philo-Semitic tendency was easily coupled with arguments for the full religious toleration of all religious groups, including the Jews, among sects such as the Baptists and Quakers.\(^{12}\) This theological interest coupled with the millenialists’ missionary zeal led them to the conviction that Christ would not return until the Jews are dispersed into all parts of the earth. This peculiar development in England meant that, compared to the continent, Englishmen published

less anti-Jewish literature. Moreover, England did not have dominating anti-semitic
curch leaders with the significant result that there were multiple interpretations of the
Bible and thus various religious bodies in the Protestant church. These peculiarly
English factors made the readmission of Jews possible in the middle of the seventeenth
century.\footnote{Parkes, “Jewish-Christian Relations,” p. 152; Jonathan I. Israel, European Jewry in the Age of
1656,” in Three Centuries of Anglo-Jewish History, ed. V. D. Lipman, (London: The Jewish Historical
52-54.}

The growing philo-Semitic tendency was closely related to the emerging interest,
among the learned, in the Hebrew language. The gradual openness of the Englishmen to
Hebrew made it possible for a positive examination of their customs and practices in the
general intellectual world of the society as well as in theological debates. If Hebrew was
the \textit{prima lingua}, as many Christians believed, then learning Hebrew became a
prerequisite not only for understanding the sense of Scripture but also for uncovering

At the close of the sixteenth century, the Anglican theologian, Richard Hooker
utilized the Jewish custom and practices in his \textit{The Laws of Ecclesiastical Politie}.\footnote{Richard Hooker, Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity, in Works [1839], 2 vols.} The
occasion of his work was the Puritan attack on Anglican ecclesiastical regulations,
suggesting that the Anglican festivals, customs, and institutions included superstitious
practices. In his answer to this accusation Hooker carefully examined the Jewish customs and practices and concluded that Anglican ecclesiastical practices are analogous to the Jewish practice of the Old Testament—formulating the answer to fit the Puritan orientation towards using the Bible as the source of Christian doctrines. Although Hooker did not study the Jewish customs systematically, he elevated the study of Jewish customs to the point that it became a source for evaluating Christian practice. His description of Jewish customs illustrates his admiration, despite his orthodox Christian bias, towards Jewish religious practices. For example, Hooker vindicated the Anglican custom of mourning and wearing mourning clothes at burial from the Jewish custom.¹⁶ His admiration includes, according to Rabb, such Jewish practices as their “repeated thanksgiving and recollections of God’s mercy; their attachment to fasting; their bringing of synagogues to every congregation; and their very survival… the fortitude that comes from God.” A solidly Protestant author, Hooker prepared a theological work, along with beginning a major revision of the image of Jews, which became the “the theological rock on which the seventeenth-century Church of England was built.”¹⁷

Another type of literature that provided a better understanding of the Jews was travel literature. Laurence Aldersey, a Protestant merchant in London, wrote one of the earliest travel records that provided direct contact with the Jews. In his twelve pages’ description of the Synagogue worship he depicted it:


I found them [Jews] in their service... very devout; they receive the five books of Moses, and honour them by carrying them about their Church... the Psalms they sing as we do, having no image, nor using any manner of idolatry.  

Aldersey treated the Jewish worship as theologically superior to the superstitious Catholics and much more like Protestants. This approach toward Jews, according to Rabb, marks “the beginning of a common-sense approach towards Jewry.” In effect, such earlier works of Hooker and Aldersey made a significant impact on the intellectual society of England. Though their descriptions did not recreate in the English mind a totally different image of Jews from that of Barabas and Shylock, they left raw material upon which the Englishmen could begin to reconsider the traditional views of Jews.

While Hooker was a good example of a Christian thinker who began to use Jewish material, Rabbi Menasseh ben Israel of Amsterdam was a perfect example of a Jewish scholar combining Jewish and Christian studies. Under the influence of the humanist Renaissance, Rabbi Menasseh was a teacher of the Jewish law who at the same time read broadly in the Christian Church Fathers and the medieval theologians. He belonged to a new type of Jewish scholar. He wrote a petition to the English rulers in about 1656 for readmission of Jews in England in which he dealt with the “three most false reports” which were written against Jews. The Jews were blamed for charging

---


exorbitant usuries, slaying and sacrificing infants in their Passover festival, and persuading Christians to become Jews. Menasseh argued that the affliction of the English civil war was divine retribution upon the English for their treatment of the Jews and that the only solution was readmission of the chosen people of God into England.\textsuperscript{21} He also argued that ultimate redemption “could not take place until the Dispersal was completed by the readmission of the Jews into the only important country of Europe from which they were at present absent.”\textsuperscript{22} Menasseh’s argument was also used by Christian Millenarians who claimed that only when the Jews were scattered over all the earth would the Messiah come.

Though not the pioneer, Weemse was one of the first Christian thinkers in England who prepared the theological ground for religious toleration for Jews and their readmission into England. While philo-Semitism was emerging in some intellectual circles and at the same time anti-semitic images of the Jews were still alive and well, Weemse argued for an establishment of the Jewish temple and Jewish freedom of worship in England. Considering that a genuine English interest in Hebrew literature appeared in 1647-48 and an official toleration of the Jews was passed in the Council of War on the twenty-fifth of December in 1648, Weemse’s argument for religious toleration of Jews between 1623-36 is quite early.


\textsuperscript{22} Roth, \textit{Anglo-Jewish Letters}, p. 47.
Weemse's verdict on Jews and his characterization of Judaism were largely
determined by his knowledge of selected Jewish literature in a long polemical tradition
with Judaism rather than by any first-hand contact with the Jews. The primary grounds
on which he judged Judaism are his theological conception of Jewish history and his
study of biblical revelation. Like many of his contemporaries and Protestant scholars,
Weemse viewed Judaism as a timeless system of Jewish doctrine: he was ignorant of the
various groups within Judaism that shaped their history. Like other Protestant scholars of
his day, mythical and legendary stories about Jews played a significant role in shaping his
idea of Jews and Judaism.\textsuperscript{23} Weemse may never have had any chance to meet a Jew in
his lifetime.

Consequently, it is not surprising to find that many Christian authors of the day
were prejudiced against the Jews. Buxtorf's description of Jewish custom and tradition in
\textit{Jewish Synagogue} included tremendous Christian bias. His characterization of Jewish
superstition is almost an equivalent of blasphemy against Christ. Buxtorf wrote the
following by way of introduction to his description of the Jewish custom:

to show how they [Jews] fell from the Word of the Lord, became
Apostates, and renegadoes, casting themselves headlong into that labyrinth
of Errors, the Talmud... the Doctrine of Salvation was not at all found
among them; but on the contrary, gross heresie, perversion, falsification of
the Word of God, superstition, outward pride, eye-service, the great
disquietness of conscience, and horrible desperation of heart.\textsuperscript{24}

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{24} Buxtorf, \textit{The Jewish Synagogue}, p. 39.
\end{flushleft}
As a Hebrew bookseller and printer he had met some Jews and must have used his first-hand experiences in his *Juden Schul*, although, as Burnett argues, his writing shows "lack of first-hand exposure to Jewish communal life."\(^{25}\) Even first-hand encounter with Jews could be influenced by Christian bias. George Sandys, an English contemporary of Weemse, recorded the following regarding the manner of Jewish prayer after he had first experience of Jews in his travel to Palestine:

They [Jews] reade in savage Tones, and sing in Tunes that have no affinitie with Musicke: joyning voyces at the severall closes. But their fantasticall gestures exceed all Barbarisme, continually weaving their bodies, and often jumping up-right... They pray silently, with ridiculous and continuall noddings of their heads, not to bee scene, and not laugh at.\(^{26}\)

The situation was even true of Richard Simon, a century later, who had frequent contacts with Jews and even defended them. Though Simon admired Jewish piety as represented by their prayer and charity, his admiration could not overcome his general concept of Jews as a bizarre and stubborn people who should be treated in the spirit of the Gospel.\(^{27}\)

\(^{25}\) Burnett, *Christian Hebraism*, pp. 67-68.


Based on diverse sources including Buxtorf, Weemse’s works show a biased understanding of the Jews. He said that God had passed judgment on the Jews both in soul and body.

So it is holden by many that the Iewes have a loathsome and stinking smell, and ... a stinking breath. When Marcus the Prince was going to Egypt, as he past through Canaan, he was much troubled with a loathsome smell and stinke of the Iewes (as Marcellinus calls it). 28

Weemse believed that God entrusted his Word to them and that they kept it through the service of faithful Masoretes. However, Weemse thought, they misinterpreted it and became “ridiculous” and “superstitious in keeping it.” They “corruptly observed” the Law and became “great breakers” of the Law. 29 They were superstitious when they alternated the name of God Jehovah and in interpretation of the ceremonial laws. 30 The result of Weemse’s biblical study was that he, like earlier Reformers and his Protestant contemporaries like Buxtorf, Drusius, and Scaliger, demonstrated both love and Christian reservation, sometimes even contempt, towards the Jews. This attitude toward the Jews led to his delineation of their present practices as


29 Weemse, Synagogue, in Works [1636], vol. 1, pp. 91-92.

both fact and fiction. His basic attitude toward Jews was that Jews were faithful keepers of Scripture but at the same time bad interpreters of it.

The Jews... preferre the shadow to the body, the ceremonies to Christ, the bones to the marrow, because they content themselves onely with the outward figures or types, and seeke not for the thing signified, and so they have the killing letter, but not the quickning spirit.

Therefore, Weemse admonished the young divines to study “the holy Scriptures in their owne proper languages, the Hebrew and the Greeke; so that they speake not to you by an interpreter; and that the proverbe in the Talmud, may not be applied to you.”

In fact, Weemse began his discussion of Jews with a theological judgment on them. He assessed the spiritual status of the Jews in three successive stages: “ganmni, my people,” “lognammi, not my people,” and “Ruchama, to be pittied.” Since within the period of Christ’s church they are to be pitied, in spite of their past sins, they need to be treated accordingly.

They are now (saith the Apostle) enemies, but yet this people [Israel] are beloved of God, because of the election once made, for his election is not

---


32 Weemse, Ceremoniall Lawes, in Works [1636], vol. 3, p. 176.


34 Weemse, Foure Degenerate Sonnes, in Works [1636], vol. 4, p. 297-304.
frustrate for the infidelity of those who hate the Gospel, seeing Gods
calling and election are without change.\textsuperscript{35}

If Weemse had anything positive to say about Jews, it was because they were the people
of God in the Old Testament to whom the Word of God was entrusted. He considered the
Jews to be faithful keepers of God’s revelation in the Bible, though bad interpreters of it.
This line of thought is quite different from many other English theologians, especially
that of John Owen who moved from the idea that the Jews are Christ-killers to the
conclusion that they could not, or even should not, be the chosen people of God who keep
the Word of God.\textsuperscript{36}

Weemse dealt with the subject in his \textit{An Exposition of the Judicial Laws} (1632)
and in \textit{A Treatise of the Four Degenerate Sons} (1636). The former text begins with a
negative judgment that the Jews “should not be tolerated amongst Christians,” citing
“many reasons allledged” against the Jews, which Weemse had taken from some
unquoted polemical literature.”\textsuperscript{37} The latter, however, begins with a positive thesis that
“the Jews are to be tolerated amongst Christians now, when they are out of the
Covenant.”\textsuperscript{38} Here, barely four years later, Weemse expressed the issue in a more
constructive way in an exposition of a part of the Hebrew Bible (Deut. 5:14 and Song of

\textsuperscript{35} Weemse, \textit{Four Degenerate Sonnes}, in \textit{Works} [1636], vol. 4, p. 356; In page 370 of the same book,
Weemse had a clear vision of the single body of Christ: “The Iewes and the Gentiles shall make up one
Church then; The Iewes were before \textit{Populus per se habitans}… and had no medling with the Gentiles, but
now they shall dwell together, and the name of Iew and Gentile shall no more be heard.”

\textsuperscript{36} Owen, “Digression of the Hebrew Vowel-Points,” pp. 523-54.

\textsuperscript{37} Weemse, \textit{Judicall Lawes}, in \textit{Works} [1636], vol. 3, p. 57

\textsuperscript{38} Weemse, \textit{Four Degenerate Sonnes}, in \textit{Works} [1637], vol. 4, p. 337.
Songs 8:8) from which he drew a conclusion that “as they did tolerate us Gentiles when we were out of the covenant.” Moreover, Weemse ended the section with the idea that the Christian church has received many “benefits” from the converted Jews. This apparent change of mind demands further examination. In *An Exposition of the Judicial Laws* Weemse argued two main points against the Jews: religious and civil. He objects to them religiously because “they detest us Christians who professe Christ, for Christs cause” and because “they hold many damnable & blasphemous opinions concerning Christ.” He objects to them on civil ground because they are “mercilesse usurers.” Weemse had two main principles for judging whether they should be tolerated in Christian society. One was a theological principle: “no false Religion should be tollerated.” The other, more cautious, was a distinction among the Jews. One group of Jews is “these miscreants who raile against the Lord Jesus Christ, and blaspheme his name” and the other group is “those poore wretches who liue in blindnes yet, but do not raile blasphemously against Christ; those we should pitie.” Weemse thought that the theological judgment must be considerably qualified by this distinction.

This distinction is more carefully elaborated in his *Christian Synagogue* and *A Treatise of the Four Degenerate Sons*. Here Weemse divided the section on religious

——

39 Weemse, *Foure Degenerate Sonnes*, in *Works* [1637], vol. 4, p. 337.

40 Weemse, *Foure Degenerate Sonnes*, in *Works* [1637], vol. 4, pp. 342-43.


toleration of Jews into three parts: first, biblical reasons for allowing Jews into Christian society; second, "what benefits the Jews may enjoy among us Christians, and what not"; third, a somewhat separate but still a significantly related topic in Weemse's mind, the many "benefits which the Christian Church hath gotten from the converted Jews." First, the standard of distinguishing among the Jews provided Weemse with the theological reason for allowing them into Christian society.

Weemse notes that in ancient times the Jews had compassion and a missionary spirit towards the strangers who were not against Judaism. It is an adaptation of this very point that Weemse used to plead that Christians should have compassion and a missionary heart for those Jews who are not against the Gospel.43 Appealing to Maimonides, Weemse distinguished among Jews according to the principle that was used by the Jews themselves in the Old Testament for the classification of strangers. There were three kinds of strangers: the "altogether stranger" who is stranger by birth, religion, and affection; the "strangers within the gate" who is stranger by birth and religion but not in affection; and the "stranger of justice" or "proselyte" who is stranger by birth but neither in religion nor affection.44

Weemse applies this Jewish category of strangers to Jews themselves. The different sorts of Jews should be treated accordingly. The confessing Jews, namely the

43 Conversion of the Jews, which was founded upon certain interpretation of Rom. 11, was one of the most significant reasons for philo-Semitic arguments, with a few exceptions such as L'Empereur and others. See van Rooden, Theology, Biblical Scholarship, p. 166; Friedman, The Most Ancient Testimony, pp. 212-51.

Jews by birth, religion, and affection, that is, who hate Christ and Christian religion are “the Synagogue of Satan” and thus should be rejected from Christian society. But the second and third kinds of Jews might be tolerated in Christian society as advena porta. The law of the Old Testament shows a special compassion for the “stranger who is within your gates,” יְרֵעַ אֵשֶׁר בְּשַׁעַר (Deut. 5:14). Weemse explains the status of the strangers within the Jewish community:

Of him it is meant in the fourth command, (the stranger that is within thy gates:) he dwelt peaceably amongst them; he was to abstaine from outward offence, not to labour upon the Sabboth; although he was not converted, yet they suffered him to dwell amongst them: they were to take no usury of him, that so they might draw him to the truth.  

Weemse applies an exact parallel of this Jewish compassion toward advena porta to Christian compassion toward the Jews:

Those Iewes who are strangers by birth and religion, but not in affection, (that is) who would be content to live amongst the Christians; not giving any offence, although they be not converted, yet we should suffer them for a time, peaceably to dwell amongst us, and lay no hard taxation upon them, that they may be drawne to the Christian faith. But those who are Iewes by birth onely, but neither in affection, nor religion; they should have all the privileges that any Christian hath, neither should they be counted strangers.

Another parallel is found in the method of drawing the “strangers” to truth. As the “strangers within the gate” of the Old Testament were taught the seven precepts of Noah,
argues Weemse, Christian society should teach the peaceably resident Jews “some short principles of Christian religion.”

This approach finds some continuity not only with the views of later orthodox theologians of the seventeenth century but also with those of some of the Reformers of the sixteenth century. Luther, who is famous with his scornful treatise on the Jews in On the Jews and Their Lies (1543), wrote favorably about them in his earlier work That Christ was Born a Jew (1523). In the earlier work Luther used an analogy similar to that of Weemse. Luther said, first of all, that Christians should deal with the Jews out of Christian love for their conversion and that Christians should treat them in the way the Jewish Apostles treated the Gentiles.

I hope that if one deals in a kindly way with the Jews and instructs them carefully from Holy Scripture, many of them will become genuine Christians and turn again to the faith of their fathers... If the apostles, who also were Jews, had dealt with us Gentiles as we Gentiles deal with the Jews, there would never have been a Christian among the Gentiles.

Calvin did not specifically articulate anything about the Jews’ status in the Christian community, but Oberman hypothesizes that he had a favorable attitude toward them. Though Calvin did not declare his attitude toward Jews with the concept of strangers advena porta, nor in the terms Luther used, Oberman assumes that Calvin’s refuge

---

48 Weemse, Foure Degenerate Sonnes, in Works [1636], vol. 4, p. 338.

49 Cf. Lightfoot, Parergon concerning the Fall of Jerusalem, and the condition of the Jews in that land after, in Works [1822], vol. 3, pp. 408-12.

experience would have led him to a more tolerant attitude toward Jews, who were
refugees of old.  

This position of Weemse concerning Jewish toleration is clear even in the section
of the Judicial Laws. The Jews who are advena porta should be pitied, not rejected:

First, we should pitie them for their fathers cause the Patriarchs.
Secondly, we should pitie them, because Christ is come of them who is
blessed forever; thirdly, the Oracles of God were committed to them... they were faithfull keepers of the same to others, and they were like a
lanterne who held out the light to others, although they saw not with it
themselves. Fourthly, when we Gentiles were out of the Covenant they
prayed for us, Cant. 8.8. We have a little sister what shall wee doe for
her? So when they are out of the Covenant; We haue an Elder brother,
Luke 15. What shall we doe for him? And lastly, because of the hope of
their conversion, that they shall be graffed in again, Rom. 11. 

At the end of this first section Weemse reiterates his idea more clearly in case
anybody would argue that this idea of tolerated Jews advena porta contradicts his
theological principle that no false religion should be permitted. He stated two conditions
for theological toleration of the Jews—when those Jews hold their Jewish religion
“through ignorance” and when there is hope of conversion. All of the reasons he
suggests for allowing Jews in English society are governed by his orthodox
understanding of the full body of Christ:

51 Oberman, The Roots of Anti-Semitism, p. 140; Cf., for a similar argument see I. John Hesselink, Jr.,
“Calvin on the Relation of the Church and Israel Based Largely on His Interpretation of Romans 9-11,” in
Calvin as Exegete: Papers and Responses presented at the Ninth Colloquium on Calvin and Calvin Studies,
ed. Peter De Klerk, (Grand Rapids: Calvin Studies Society, 1995), pp. 95-96; Cf., Mary Sweetland Laver,

52 Weemse, Judicall Lawes, in Works [1636], vol. 3, p. 60.

The conversion of the lewes serves much for the compleating of the mysticall body of Christ, there is an... emptines in that mysticall body, Rom. 11. untill the Jewes be brought in... when the Church wants the lewes, it is emptie as it were, and they with us make up one perfect body.\textsuperscript{54}

Thus, Weemse argued that though the Jews of affection, that is the Jews by heart, are to be excluded from the Christian community, other Jews who are only Jews by birth and religion should be allowed to stay in the Christian community.

Those lewes who are strangers by birth and religion, but not in affection, (that is) who would be content to live amongst the Christians; not giving any offence, although they be not converted, yet wee should suffer them for a time, peaceably to dwell amongst us, and lay no hard taxations upon them, that they may be drawne to the Christian faith. But those who are lewes by birth onely, but neither in affection, nor religion; they should have all the priviledges that any Christian hath, neither should they be counted strangers.\textsuperscript{55}

Secondly, Weemse mentioned the benefits that Jews should be allowed to enjoy in the Christian commonwealth. He tolerated in a Christian society the establishment of their synagogues, circumcision, and the reading of their laws in the synagogue. But, following the medieval tradition, he disallowed inter-marriage between Jews and Christians, and Christians' working for the Jews as servants.\textsuperscript{56} Though the Jews with religious affection should not be tolerated, he emphasized that the proper Jews should be accepted conditionally. Only those Jews should be allowed whose conversion could be hoped for, because they were entrusted with the divine revelation in Scripture and they would be grafted again to the tree of life. They could practice their Jewish customs and


read the Law in their synagogue on the assumption of the power of God’s Word working in the mind of the reader and hearer of the Law.

For the word of God is still the word of God, although they abuse it to a wrong end... and howsoever the Jews abuse this word to a wrong end in reading it, yet it is the word of God stil, and they should be tollerete to reade it, providing that they bring not in their blasphemous interpretation upon it.\(^57\)

Therefore, Weemse did not hesitate to allow Jewish religious existence in a Christian commonwealth as long as resident Jews refrained from blasphemy. On this condition he even allowed the practice of circumcision, although such allowance of the circumcision, he emphasized, “makes not their circumcision lawful, but only tolerable.”\(^58\)

Thirdly, Weemse envisions the cooperating spirit within the full body of Christ which is made of both the Jews and the Gentiles. While Jews enjoy the Christian commonwealth, the Gentile Christians receive benefits from the Jews. “Many are the benefits which the Christian Church hath gotten from the converted Jewes.” The benefit is textual and linguistic scholarship of the Hebrew Bible that Christians draw from the Jewish sources, which comprises Weemse’s five helps for understanding Scripture. As examples of Jewish benefits Weemse names Julianus, a converted Jew, who later became a bishop of Spain, and then he specifically notes converts who became noted Christian

\(^{57}\) Weemse, *Foure Degenerate Sonnes*, in *Works* [1636], vol. 4, p. 341.

exegetes: Paul of Burgos, Nicholas of Lyra, Antonius Margarita, and most importantly Immanuel Tremellius.59

A "delightfully new approach," says Parkes, in Weemse’s discussion is that, while it was the usual course of the day to apply the harsh regulations of the medieval charters, Weemse drew his principal argument from the Jewish practice of the Old Testament.60 Weemse’s argument that since the Jews of the Old Testament law tolerated the Gentiles as little sisters, so Christians are to treat them as elder brothers, would have sounded quite striking to those who were familiar with the images of Jews represented by the figures of Barabas and Shylock. This way of seeking answers from Jewish notions of social justice in the Old Testament would be used in about twenty years by Menasseh ben Israel when he petitioned the English rulers for readmission of the Jews in England. Resisting the “three most false reports” about Jews, Menasseh argued that Jews did not require a merciless usury in exacting from the Christians, but “with a very small profit of 4 or 5 per cent, as Christians themselves do.” He defended the point saying that they “put their money ordinarily in Banco.”61 The ground for his appeal was again based on the Jewish tradition in the Old Testament.

... because a Jew is bound to shew his charity to all men: for he hath a precept, not to abhorre an Idumean, nor an Egyptian; and that he shall love

59 Weemse, Foure Degenerate Sonnes, in Works [1636], vol. 4, pp. 342-43.

60 Parkes, “Jewish-Christian Relations,” pp. 156; idem., Judaism and Christianity (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1948), p. 152. J. Jodocus Beck argued in 1731 that a Christian state can tolerate Jews on the condition that they should be compelled with “full medieval conditions, with special dress and so on.”

61 Cited by Jones, The Jews of Britain, pp. 85-86
and protect a stranger that come to live in his land. If notwithstanding there be some that do contrary to this, they do it not as a Jewes simply, but as wicked Jewes, as amongst all nations there are found generally some Usurers.\textsuperscript{62}

In this petition, Menasseh tries to appeal, though indirectly, that, while denying the social crimes allegedly committed by Jews against Christians, Christian countries would return the old Jewish favor to the strangers.

Another fresh motivation for religious toleration of the Jews in Weemse’s discussion is the Puritan concept of inviolability of conscience. He said, using the authority of Tertullian and Cransius, that “it is not the part of religion to compell a man to religion, which should be willingly professed, and not by compulsion.”\textsuperscript{63} Despite the general agreement among the Christians that heresy should be severely punished, William Ames and Weemse argued for a limited toleration of the Jews on the Calvinistic ground that no Jews or any non-Christian could be converted by means other than the work of the Holy Spirit.\textsuperscript{64} As Bowman pointed out, these assumptions generated two seemingly inconsistent statements in Weemse’s work. On the same page where he argues that only those Jews for whose conversion there is hope should be allowed in Christian community, Weemse also says that “the Jews are not to be compelled to christian religion.”\textsuperscript{65} These two statements of Weemse do not necessarily contradict each other,

\textsuperscript{62} Jones, \textit{The Jews of Britain}, p. 87.


\textsuperscript{64} Jordan, \textit{The Development of Religious Toleration in England}, vol. 2, pp. 211-12.

however, given Weemse’s two major principles, namely, first, that no false religion should be tolerated, and, second, the distinction among the Jews according to their religious affection. The first statement is in fact a practical application of his second principle, that is, that religious Jews should be distinguished from religiously nominal Jews. By the second statement he explains only the method of converting the Jews. Weemse’s concern for individual religious conscience is undoubtedly parallel to another Calvinistic conviction that the Spirit of God works in human minds along with the divine revelation in the Word of God. Religion, for Weemse, is not a matter of coercion, but a matter of conviction that is wrought by the mysterious work of the Holy Spirit. Thus, though Weemse’s reasons for Jewish toleration sounded somewhat striking in the context of the religious mind of his day, his idea of Jewish toleration is not necessarily “more tolerant than his theology” in general, as Bowman argues.66

Much as Buxtorf’s Jewish ethnography, The Juden Schuld, provided an initial introduction to Jewish customs and tradition for the Christian world,67 so Weemse’s description of them was both a product of the newly emerging interest in Jewish literature and at the same time provided a positive conception of Jews to the coming generation. Weemse’s work on Judaica, published about two decades before public attention was focused on their readmission to England, could have made a certain positive impression, though it was not a direct cause, in making the decision to readmit Jews. The Christian


philological and cultural studies, however, were not done for objective or scientific knowledge of Judaica, but to further traditional Christian faith and practice. This Christian trend is well represented not only by such Christian scholars as Buxtorf and Weemse but also by such converted Jews as Fagius. They used Judaica in order to have a better understanding of Christianity and Scripture.

To an extent, Fagius used rabbinic opinion within a preconceived pattern in which each source was selected to fill a given slot, here grammar and there concept, toward a greater end to which the sources themselves did not lead. Consequently, it is not surprising that in many locations tension and inconsistency existed between his various sources themselves or between his sources and the overall pattern into which they were fit.  

2. Employment of Hebrew Culture and Custom for Christian Exegesis

Although knowledge of Greek and Hebrew is helpful for understanding the sense of Scripture, grammatical and etymological studies are not enough because language, according to Weemse, is not a fixed system of signs in which each sign has a fixed meaning, but is alive within its living context: “we must take heed, what sort of people the phrase hath relation to.” Thus, although holy scribes wrote the New Testament in the Greek language, there are sundry idioms that are not Greek in origin. There are five sorts of idioms, said Weemse, in the New Testament. They are Hebraisms, Talmudic proverbs, words and idioms that came from the Septuagint translation, and of course

---


Greek and Latin words. An example of Talmudic proverbs used in Scripture is Christ’s words, “it is easier to cause a Camel to goe through a needles eye” in Matthew 19:24. Weemse claimed that this pronouncement came from a Talmudic questions: “are you of Pambeditha, who can cause an Elephant to goe through a needles eye?” The word “elephant” was changed to “camel” to fit the Hebrew social context. So also the phrase “to kicke against the pricks” and the statement “take out the straw out of thine owne teeth.”

Weemse therefore argued that knowledge of the Hebrew language and customs was a necessary part of biblical interpretation at the fundamental level of idiom. As the title The Christian Synagogue indicates, moreover, Weemse saw an intimate relationship between Christian biblical interpretation and the tradition of the Jewish synagogue. In fact he freely utilized various rabbinic and medieval Jewish writings for the benefit of Christian exegesis and preaching. For the rabbinic literature Weemse was highly indebted to Buxtorf not only for the insight of using Judaica for Christian biblical interpretation but also for the general content of his work. Buxtorf’s Synagoga Judaica made a long-lasting impact on the study of Hebrew culture and the study of biblical interpretation in the Christian world. With Buxtorf’s lead, interest in Judaica in the early seventeenth century grew. In the British Isles the work was translated and used

70 Weemse, Synagogue, in Work [1636], vol. 1, pp. 33-34.
71 Burnett, “Hebrew Censorship,” p. 204.
extensively in biblical exegesis by Weemse, Godwin, and Lightfoot, and works based on it were translated well into the middle of the eighteenth century.⁷²

Weemse modeled his *Christian Synagogue* after the *Jewish Synagogue*, as its title shows, and very likely had in mind an allusion to theological progress from Jewish synagogue to Christian synagogue. Indeed, he used the term “synagogue” as a type of the Christian church. As Godwin said, while “the state of the Jewes [is] vanishing, to continue in their generations; the state of Christians [is] durable, to continue unto the worlds end.” Moreover, the Jewish synagogue looked forward to the Christian church as “the state of the Church militant here on earth, and triumphant in heaven.”⁷³ The Christian church, however, is not severed from the Jewish synagogue, says Weemse, but grew out of it. Thus, the major institutions of the Jewish synagogue, the Passover and Sabbath, are not abolished, but only changed into Lord’s Supper and Lord’s day. “The Essence is not changed, but the state.”⁷⁴

Though Weemse learned from Buxtorf the insight of the benefits that Christians receive from the knowledge of Jewish custom and tradition, he had different plans for writing his works. While Buxtorf introduced Jewish customs and tradition to the

---

⁷² Godwin, “The Epistle Dedicatory,” in *Moses and Aaron*; Johann Andreas Eisenmenger, *Rabbinical Literature: or, The traditions of the Jews, contained their Talmud and other mystical writings. Likewise the opinions of that people concerning Messiah, and the time and manner of his appearing: with an appendix comprizing Buxtorf’s account of the religious customs and ceremonies of that nation...* (London, 1748); In the late seventeenth century Richard Simon’s use of Hebrew customs in exegesis was also influential in England. See Yardeni, “La Vision des Juifs,” pp. 194-96.


Christian world with an apologetic purpose to show that Jewish faith and its foundation, the Talmud, are a misreading of Scripture, Weemse modified and developed those Jewish customs and tradition more positively for Christian biblical exegesis. Like other Christian authors of the day, Weemse did not study the Jewish synagogue for its own sake. However biased by his Christian point of view, Weemse made a significant step in the history of Christian interpretation by pioneering the interest in Jewish customs and tradition along with Hebrew philological and text-critical studies for Christian biblical exegesis.

A careful comparison of Buxtorf and Weemse shows both Weemse’s indebtedness to Buxtorf and at the same time the progress Weemse made beyond Buxtorf in the field of biblical exegesis. Buxtorf’s *Jewish Synagogue* is based on his theological judgment on the Jewish creed and faith as the result of their ungodly ingratitude, disobedience, and obstinacy, which is discussed in the first chapter of his book. Based on this Christian judgment he illustrated thirty four chapters of Jewish religious and civil customs. Buxtorf’s words represented clearly his apologetic purpose in the beginning of his discussion of Jewish customs.

My desire is, that none should be offended with this my Anatomy of the Jewish Doctrine, in that without doubt it contains many things subject to wonder and derision, and ranked in the Catalogue of meer fables. My persuasian rather inclines to this mark, that every one read and ponder the same with fear and trembling, because that this Doctrine had its original from those people, whom God in former times did choose unto himselfe before all the Nations of the Earth... who after that by their ingratitude they had brought Gods anger and curse upon them were punished with
madness... and with blindness... whose heart was hardened, and whose ears were dull of hearing.\textsuperscript{75}

\textit{Jewish Synagogue} being a theological treatise, Buxtord discussed mostly religious subjects, though he dealt with a few Jewish civil customs. The most significant subjects are rites and feasts of the Jewish synagogue. They are circumcision, prayer, worship, and feasts like Passover, Pentecost, Tabernacle, New Moon, New Year, and Sabbath. All of these subjects were covered in Weemse's \textit{Christian Synagogue}. The subjects that Weemse did not discuss are the Jewish manner of eating and begging, and their diseases. Weemse divided his treatment of Jewish custom into ecclesiastical and civil dimensions. In this way he discussed broader subjects more systematically than Buxtord did. Ecclesiastical custom is again divided into times, places, and persons for worship, ecclesiastical polity, and educational polity. And civil custom covered the Jewish judicial system and punishment, civil contracts and bargains, measuring and weighing system, counting years, marriage and divorce, civil feasts, apparel, war, and burial.

An exemplary comparison of Jewish circumcision will illustrate the similarity and dissimilarity between Weemse and Buxtord. In the section on circumcision, Buxtord discussed two Jewish superstitious fables around child-birth, wild celebration after giving birth, a long, but derisive description of the act of circumcision, the mother's ceremonial cleansing after giving birth, redemption of the first-born, and concluded by upholding the Christian concept of circumcision against the Jewish understanding. Buxtord described time, place, people, furniture, and the action of circumcision, but he focused on how their

\textsuperscript{75} Buxtord, \textit{Jewish Synagogue}, p. 40.
manner and belief regarding circumcision were superstitiously opposed to the
prescription of the Old Testament Law. Regarding the Jewish belief on the effect of the
circumcising act he said that "to proceed the casting of the fore-skin into the sand,
signifies that their seed shall be like the sand upon the sea shore for multitude." And in
the next page, about the sermon preached to the congregation after the circumcision, he
said that "I never hear such a dry and ridiculous piece of stuff in all my life."\(^76\)

While Buxtorf tried to discuss the circumcision in a negative fashion to show the
superstitious character of Jewish understanding of circumcision with a minor purpose of
giving warning to Christians, Weemse focused on, more positively, how the knowledge
of Jewish custom could help a Christian preacher to better expound Scripture. Weemse
began his section on circumcision with the Christian definition of it, namely that
"circumcision was the seale of the Covenant, to the people of God." Then he confirmed
the doctrine with Gen. 17:10.\(^77\) This Christian definition is followed by his discussions of
the day of circumcision, the Jewish custom of counting eight days, fear and punishment
of renouncing circumcision, its nature as "sign of the mortification of the old man," and
how the church had observed circumcision from the beginning to the present Christian
era, using Scotus' explanation.

Like Buxtorf, Weemse concluded the discussion of circumcision with a Christian
understanding. But unlike Buxtorf, Weemse is free of derision against the Jews, because

\(^{76}\) Buxtorf, *Jewish Synagogue*, pp. 52, 53.

\(^{77}\) Weemse, *Synagogue*, in *Works* [1636], vol. 1, p. 125.
his purpose is not an apologetic one against the Jewish concept, but to provide interpretive aid to Christian preachers to reach a better biblical understanding of the subject in question. For the same reason, Weemse did not have to illustrate all the details of the circumcising act as Buxtorf provided, but briefly pointed out how Jewish custom and tradition are related to understanding the biblical record.

A comparison of the description of the Sabbath in Buxtorf and Godwin with Weemse demonstrates the latter’s focus on the use of Jewish custom and tradition for finding the sense of Scripture, thus fit for preaching and teaching in the church. Buxtorf described how the Jews prepared and celebrated the Sabbath. He focused on the manner of feasts, clothing, prayer, synagogue service, and thirty-nine regulations of Sabbath observance. There he showed how the Jews were superstitious in believing that they had another soul on the Sabbath and that when the Sabbath is over the door of the hell opens and lets out the bad odor.\textsuperscript{78}

Godwin’s account is little more than a summary of Buxtorf’s description.\textsuperscript{79} He deprecated the lack of knowledge of Jewish culture among the preachers and encouraged them to read his book, \textit{Moses and Aaron}, as a guide to Hebrew rites and customs for better understanding of Hebrew Scripture.

That many have no better acquaintance with Christ and his Apostles, is, because they are such Strangers with Moses and Aaron: Were customes antiquated thorowly known, many difficulties in Scripture would appear

\textsuperscript{78} Buxtorf, \textit{The Jewish Synagogue}, pp. 131-72.

\textsuperscript{79} Godwin, \textit{Moses and Aaron}, pp. 97-103.
elegancies, and the places which now (through obscurity) dishearten the Reader, would then become sweet invitements to an unwearied assiduity in perusing those Sacred Oracles.\textsuperscript{80}

Yet Godwin did not offer a broad hermeneutical paradigm for the use of Hebrew customs.

In contrast, Weemse did not focus on describing the Jewish practice of celebrating the Sabbath, but on how the Jewish custom explains the meaning of biblical text. He explained how the Jewish reckoning of the day and the beginning of Sabbath related to Christ's resurrection morning. Then he focused on the meaning of rest and the regulations the Jews should have observed to observe the rest. In order to explain the sense of the fourth Commandment, Weemse talked about the Hebrew literary convention that a negative precept binds more than a positive precept. He concluded with reasons how and why Jews became superstitious in observing the fourth Commandment.\textsuperscript{81} All of these are elaborated with more illustrations in his exposition of the moral law.\textsuperscript{82} In a similar way, the Old Testament manner of sacrifice is described with a concluding remark that the tradition was translated into the New Testament tradition of prayer, that was done three times daily.\textsuperscript{83} Only Weemse drew some application and spiritual significance of Hebrew custom for Christians.

\textsuperscript{80} Godwin, “The Epistle Dedicatory,” in Moses and Aaron.

\textsuperscript{81} Weemse, Synagogue, in Works [1636], vol. 1, pp. 85-92.

\textsuperscript{82} Weemse, Moral Law I, in Works [1636], vol. 2, pp. 197-243.

\textsuperscript{83} Weemse, Synagogue, in Works [1636], vol. 1, p. 85.
Another example may be found in Weemse’s treatment of the chest of alms in the temple. While Buxtorf and Godwin described it basically historically and linguistically, Weemse went beyond that and expounded the intended sense of the Spirit with the help of its knowledge. Weemse said about the moral teaching of alms-giving: “the Hebrews say, that it had [been] written about it, this Proverb of Salomon, The gift which is given in secret, pacifieth wrath..., teaching them, that they should not blow a Trumpet as the Pharisies did when they gave their almes.”

In seventeenth-century England, Weemse’s work was followed by many eminent studies on the subject. Thus, Henry Lukin expounded Zechariah 3:10, “calling their neighbours under their vines and fig-trees,” with the help of Hebrew manners and customs. He said the passage expresses a “state of peace, and prosperity,” for vines and fig trees were signs of liberty and security in the hot countries. John Lightfoot acknowledged the benefits of knowledge of the Talmud not only for the Old Testament exegesis but also for New Testament exegesis.

When all the books of the New Testament were written by Jews, and among Jews, and unto them; and when all the discourses made there, were made in like manner by Jews, and to Jews, and among them, I was always fully persuaded, as of a thing past all doubting, that that Testament could not but everywhere tast of and retain the Jews style, idiom, form and rule of speaking... The Doctrine of the Gospel hath no more bitter enemies

---

84 Weemse, Synagogue, in Works [1636], vol. 1, p. 109.

85 Lukin, Introduction, p. 42.
than they, and yet the Text of the Gospel hath no more plain interpreters...  

a. Time, Day, and Year

As chronology was considered to be significant for the sense of Scripture, the Jewish manner of reckoning time caught the growing attention of the Hebraists. Thus, in the middle of sixteenth-century England, the Hebraist, James Pilkington argued that Jews had different ways of reckoning their years and months.

The Jews in reckoning their years and months have divers sorts. For sometimes March is their first and the beginning of their year, and specially when they count their solemn feasts, as God bad Moses, that the moon wherein they came out of Egypt, should be the first moon in the year. Sometime was September, when all the fruits of the earth was gathered into their barns. Sometime they reckon from the day of the coronation of their kings... But their moons were reckoned to begin ever from the change of the moon, what day soever of our moon it changed, and not by the calendar (for then there was none made), as we do.  

Similarly Weemse notes that “time is the measure of motion, and the originall of time is light, for it began with light, and shall end with it.” The Jews’ concepts of day and night were therefore shaped by the creation order: “Night is the privation of light, and the habit goeth alwayes before the privation; therefore the day was before the night.” Day according to the Jews is either natural or artificial. The natural day is the space of

---


88 Weemse, *Synagogue*, in *Works* [1636], vol. 1, p. 86.

twenty-four hours and the artificial day is of twelve hours. When Christ said in John 11:9 "Are there not twelve hours in the day?" he meant, according to Weemse, the twelve hours of the artificial day. The Jews again divided the natural day into two. While Weemse makes very clear that the artificial day began at sunrise and ended at sunset, he seems to judge that there were more than one understanding of the beginning of the natural day in Jewish tradition. For while in the *Christian Synagogue* he says that the natural day began at the sunset, he says otherwise in *Moral Law I*: "the setting of the sunne cannot be the beginning of the naturall day, for this is contrary to the order of creation."

In saying that the beginning of the day at sunset is according to the Jewish civil law, however, Weemse leaves room for the religious understanding of the beginning of the day at sunset. He continues in the *Moral Law I*:

> Therefore no man ought to invert the order of nature for the beginning of the day, except God come in by his divine institution and change it, as when he brought the children of Israel out of Egypt in the evening, and instituted the Passeover as a memoriall of that deliverance, he began that day at the evening which observation they kept from that night in which they came out of Egypt, until that morning when Christ rose again from the dead.\(^9\)

According to the Jewish custom, while the civil day or working day began with one sunrise and ended with the next sunrise, the sacred day that was destined for ceremony

---

began at sunset. Thus, Sabbath naturally began at sunrise, but the ceremonial Sabbath began at sunset, the sunset of Friday.\textsuperscript{91}

The Hebrews divided the day into four parts and the night into three parts. The first part of the natural day is from sunset to midnight, the second to sunrise, the third to the middle of the day, and the last till sunset. The artificial day was also divided into four parts: the first from twilight till the third hour, the second to the sixth hour, the third to the ninth hour, the fourth till night. The night was divided into three “watches” and every “watch” was comprised of equal four hours. The first hour began at the beginning of the night. This is the period of time, says Weemse, which is mentioned in Lam. 2:19 “Arise, cry out in the night, as the watches of the night begin.” The middle watch is alluded to in Judges 7:19 when Gideon and his hundred men began to attack the Midianites “at the beginning of the middle watch, just after they had changed the guard.” And the “morning watch” is alluded to in the Exodus: “during the last watch of the night the Lord looked down from the pillar of fire and cloud at the Egyptian army and threw it into confusion” (Ex. 14:24).\textsuperscript{92}

Jews divided the morning into three parts. The first morning has more darkness than light; the second is between the two; and the third has more light. The first part of the morning belonged to the night before, the second between the two, and the third


\textsuperscript{92} Weemse, \textit{Synagogue}, in \textit{Works} [1636], vol. 1, p. 165.
morning belonged to the day following. Matthew’s gospel records that the women came to Christ’s tomb, ὅ φ ᾗ δὲ σαββάτων, τῇ ἐπιφωσούσῃ εἰς πίνακα βάτων, “but late of the Sabbath, at the drawing on of the Sabbath” (the second Sabbath meaning the “week”). The morning of the Sabbath in this statement was addressed in the Greek custom which was used in the day of Christ, says Weemse, according to which Sabbath began in the morning. The Jewish ceremonial Sabbath began and ended in the evening. The time period that the gospel mentioned was when “the Iewes Sabbath being ended, it began to dawne to the first day of the weeke.” The first part of this phrase means the first morning, but the second part the third morning. Weemse harmonizes these different times as part of the ongoing process of women’s rising, going, and arriving at the sepulchre.

The Jewish hour, according to Weemse, is either simple or compound. While a simple hour is one out of twenty-four hours of the natural day, a compound hour is one fourth of daylight and each compound hour is composed of three simple hours. The compound hours are called by the name of the last hour of it. Thus, the first compound hour is from sunrise to the third hour and is called the “third hour.” The last compound hour is from ninth hour to sunset and is called the “last hour.” Within the understanding of this Hebrew compound hour are harmonized the seeming different records of the time

---


94 Weemse, Synagogue, in Works [1636], vol. 1, p. 87; idem, Moral Law I, in Works [1636], vol. 2, pp. 202-203.
of Christ's crucifixion. The gospel of Mark says it was about the third hour while Luke's gospel sixth hour. Weemse says that "that is when the third houre was ended, and the sixt houre beginning and not finished."\textsuperscript{95}

The Jewish concept of time was "current" time rather than punctual. In other words, the Hebrew time means a certain period of time as described by the "compound" time. Thus, for example, evening in Hebrew meant various periods of time. It meant the time when the sun is going down; it also meant the time when the sun is setting. When the Law (Ex. 12:6) prescribed a sacrifice "between the evenings" (בֵּין הָעֵרֶב), it did not mean the period of twenty four hours, but between the time when the sun declines and the time when it sets, that is at twilight. These two evenings belong to the day, but the third evening, that is dark night, properly belongs to night. This evening was also the evening when Leah was brought to Jacob by Laban.\textsuperscript{96}

When it is said that "the evening and the morning were the first day" (Gen. 1:5), it does not mean, says Weemse, that night goes before day or darkness goes before light. The statement should be understood according to the Hebrew concepts of morning, evening, and the middle of the two terms. There was twofold concept of midst; one is the "midst of equall distance from the two extreames," that is at the middle point, and the other is the "midst of interposition," that is a space of time between the extremes. When ובֵין of Gen. 1 is called "evening," it was understood to be the midst of interposition, not

\textsuperscript{95} Weemse, Synagogue, in Works [1636], vol. 1, pp. 167-68.

\textsuperscript{96} Weemse, Moral Law I, in Works [1636], vol. 2, p. 204.
the midst between the extremes. The evening here may mean either partly day or partly night. The evening is the ending of the light and morning is the ending of the night. The evening here belongs to the day, and not to the night.\footnote{Weemse, \textit{Moral Law I}, in \textit{Works} [1636], vol. 2, pp. 201-202.}

Now when it is said the evening and the morning was the first day; by the morning here is understood the first part of the morning ending the night, rather than beginning the day, as by the first part of \textit{Gnereb} is understood, the ending of the day, and not the beginning of the night.\footnote{Weemse, \textit{Moral Law I}, in \textit{Works} [1636], vol. 2, p. 203.}

The evening and morning means a day by synecdoche which spans the period of time from the ending of the light to the ending of the night.

The current understanding of Hebrew time should also apply to the requirement of the period of eight days for circumcision. The Law prescribed circumcision to be done on the eighth day after birth. But the Hebrew understanding of eight days did not mean a full and complete eight days, but six full days. For the Jews said that “the daies of the Law are not from time to time...not from a full time.” The eighth day began but “not fulfilled.” This concept of time span should serve to explain the period of three days in which Christ was in the tomb. When Christ was said to lie for three days and three nights in the tomb, it did not mean that Christ was in the tomb for a full three days, but that he rose from the dead in three current days.

The concept of current time applies to years in the Hebrew Bible. When Deuteronomy 15:12 reads “at the end of the seven years,” it did not mean when the seven
full years were complete. It should be translated as “in the end of the seventh year” rather than “after the end of the seventh year.” Similarly Jeremiah’s words “when the seventy years are fulfilled” means current time, not complete time. In this way, the Jews understood time, day, month, and year in the manner of synecdoche.

The Hebrew understanding of time as current time led them to describe actions as done which were in fact still in process. “The Scriptures speake of things as done, when they are but in the act of doing.” The Jewish concept of time may include the time period going before or after, exclude both, or include one of them and exclude the other. Matthew 17:1 says that Jesus took Peter “after six days,” while Luke 9:28 reads “about eight days after.” According to the Hebrew concept of reckoning time, these two records do not contradict each other. For Matthew reckoned time excluding both terms going before and after, while Luke included both. In the same manner, the three years wherein the Lord promised to bless the land was not to be reckoned a full three years, but “one whole yeare and two halfe years.” In this way the half year was reckoned as a full year. The civil contract also reckoned the period of time in this way. Thus, if a king

---


was crowned a day before Nisan, that is March, he was said to be reigning for two
years by Nisan the next year.  

Hebrew Scripture specifies definite or indefinite periods of time by a combination
of days, months, and years. Weemse was aware of the Jewish custom of how to reckon
the period of time:

When the word Dies is put in the plurall number, and some lesse number
following it, then it signifieth a yeare and the lesse number signifieth
moneths... but when dayes are put alone, they signifie an indefinite time,
and not an yeare.  

An example of the former type of reckoning time is from Gen. 24:55. When it is said “let
her abide with us dayes or ten,” it meant “a yeare of dayes or at least ten moneths.” The
sentence that “David abode with the Philstims days and four months” is to say that he
stayed there “a yeare of days and foure moneths.” The latter case is found in Judges 14:8
“after dayes he returned to take her.” This means that Samson returned after a few days
to take her, not after a whole year.  

b. The Hebrew Way of Counting Years

According to Weemse, Hebrews reckoned their ages in three ways: by their
hands, letters, and ciphers. Thus, Proverbs 3:16 reads “Length of days is in her right
hand.” The finger was the first measure for the Jews as Isaiah 40:12 reads “who hath

---

104 Weemse, Synagoge, in Works [1636], vol. 1, pp. 169-70.
measured the waters with the hollow of his hand...” They numbered “first with their right hand upon the left.”

Weemse added in passing the significance of using the right hand over the left hand in counting. The right side is the natural way for action. The Jews wrote from right to left. They had a spiritual reason for believing this—“the spirits lie in the right side of the heart... there are not so many spirits in the left side of the heart to quicken the hand.” They counted numbers up to one hundred on the left hand and moved to the right hand to count beyond it. When they counted beyond one thousand, they used their left hand upon the breast, beyond a hundred thousand they used their right hand on their belly.

The Hebrews also separated the life of man into five different categories. Nursing children up to age three were called נביים. These are those children up to age thirteen. Thus, נער was a term indicating age. It was also used as to mean “man” in a general sense including both infants and men. Joseph was called נער when he was thirty years old. Thirdly, man is called בrawer when he passed age thirteen. Men over thirteen began to observe the Law and wear a phylactery. Fourthly, men from twenty to sixty were called תagogue. This is why they were prescribed to give offering in Exodus 30:14 that “all who cross over, those twenty years old or more, are to give an offering to the Lord.” And these were the ones who were chosen for war. The fifth category, men over sixty years


old, was again divided into three groups. אַרְבָּעִים was from age sixty to seventy; שְׁבָעִים from seventy to eighty; and וָאֵלֶּף over eighty.\textsuperscript{109}

The Jewish manner of reckoning numbers, said Weemse, is not without spiritual edification. By reckoning numbers on their hands, they were continuously reminded of the shortness of life. For the same reason they wore phylacteries on their arms to remind them of the divine precepts. "So should we," said Weemse, "put those numbers upon our hands, and continually make use of them for the shortnesse of our life."\textsuperscript{110}

c. Passover

In the same way as for the Sabbath, the Jews made a thorough preparation for the Passover. Using Scaliger and Elias Levita, Weemse described the procedure of their preparation.\textsuperscript{111} First, on the fourteenth day of the Passover month, they searched out leaven from sunrise to the fourth hour. Next, they cast it out of the house or burnt it till the sixth hour. The Jews were not only forbidden to use it but also forbidden to look at it. Lastly, they cursed leaven: "all the Leaven whatsoever is here in my power, which I neither saw nor have put away, let it be nothing, and let it be esteemed as the dust of the earth." During this preparation and the feast Jews did not even use the word "leaven" for


\textsuperscript{111} Weemse, \textit{Synagogue}, in \textit{Works} [1636], vol. 1, pp. 129-30; Weemse cites Scaliger's \textit{Prolegomena... praemisit, notas...subject, denique indices...addidit Evaldus Scheibel, repr. 1852, and Opus de emendatione temporum}, Plantiniana, 1598. Weemse uses Levita's work without citation.
fear that it may cause children to desire leavened bread. The thorough elimination of leaven in Jewish Passover was translated by Weemse for a Christian teaching for the believers of the church.

As they had a diligent search, to finde the Leaven before the Passeover, to cast it out, not to looke upon it, and to count it execrable which they had not found, and not to name it once; so we should purge out the old Leaven, when we are to eate out Passeover, wee should detest it, consume it, and not let it once be named amongst us.\textsuperscript{112}

In the course of describing the Jewish manner of eating the Passover, Weemse mentions three occasions of Christ’s adaptation of the Jewish tradition to Christian use. At the Passover Jews had three suppers, the common supper, Passover, and the dismissory supper. During the common supper, the head of the house broke, blessed, and gave bread to the households. The bread given to each member was bigger than an olive but smaller than an egg. After the bread he blessed the first cup of wine. The Lord borrowed the institution of the Lord’s Supper from this breaking the bread and giving the wine. Before Jews sat down for the dismissory supper, they washed their feet. A servant washed the feet of the guests. Those who were devout would wash their whole body twice. Two things should be mentioned regarding this washing of the feet. One is that the Lord assumed the position of servant; the other is that when Peter desired to wash his whole body, he alluded to the Jewish tradition of the devout. After the head of the family blessed the second cup, the household began to sing Psalms beginning with 113 and ending with 119. After the last cup, they also sang Psalms. After this last cup but before

\textsuperscript{112} Weemse, \textit{Synagogue}, in \textit{Works} [1636], vol. 1, p. 130.
the singing of the Psalms, Christ instituted his “evangelical supper.” After the last cup
the head of the family said the Pascal order, “this night I will drinke no more.” Christ
alluded to this when he said that “henceforth I will drinke no more of the fruit of the
Vine, untill I drinke it in the kingdome of my Father.”¹¹³

d. Civil Judgment

There were three judicial bodies among the Jews. The first one was the great
Sanhedrin or the house of judgment. Although it consisted of seventy-two judges, it was
usually called the seventy according to the Jewish custom of simplifying the number.
They judged matters of great weight, both ecclesiastical and civil. The second judicial
body consisted of twenty-three persons and judged common criminal matters. The third
judicial body consisted of at least three judges, because it was said that with two persons,
there can be no true judgment. They judged small matters like whipping for small
villages that had a population of 120 or smaller.¹¹⁴

According to Weemse’s Christian understanding, the description of the Jewish
tradition of judgment illuminates Christ as the Judge and Advocate of Christians. When
the judges pronounced a sentence of condemnation they fasted, because they said that to
lose an Israelite is as tragic as destroying the frame of the world. So, in examining great
criminals the judges made great deliberation. When they judged, they sat and the accuser

¹¹³ Weemse, Synagogue, in Works [1636], vol. 1, pp. 131-36.
¹¹⁴ Weemse, Synagogue, in Works [1636], vol. 1, pp. 176-80.
stood at the right hand of the accused. The statements made by accuser or witness had
to be clear and evident and they had to come with specific evidence, such as what day,
what month, or what year the crime had happened. The accused had no advocate to
speak for him. There were two scribes, sitting at the right and left hand of the judges.
One of them wrote the sentences of absolution, the other the sentences of condemnation.
Christ alluded to this format of judgment when he said that the sheep shall sit at the right
hand, and the goats at the left hand. He who was absolved was ordered to stand in the
council, but the condemned was to fall. Thus it was said that “the wicked shall not stand
in judgment” as in Psalm 1. The absolved was given a white stone, like the one
mentioned in the book of Revelation.\textsuperscript{115}

Weemse’s description of the Jewish tradition of judgment led him to a better
Christian understanding of the final judgment. From the Christian point of view, it is a
sheer comfort to know that while the Jewish judgment did not allow the accused to have
an advocate, but only an accuser at the right hand, believers will enjoy having Christ as
their Advocate. “Our comfort at the last day, shall be this: that Sathan the accuser shall
not stand at the right hand to accuse us: and that we shall have Iesus the just as our
Advocate to speak for us.”\textsuperscript{116}

Jews had four forms of capital punishment: stoning, strangling, burning, and
beheading. The Romans later changed strangling to crucifying. While the strangled was


\textsuperscript{116} Weemse, \textit{Synagogue}, in \textit{Works} [1636], vol. 1, p. 182.
first killed and then hung up, the crucified was first hung up and then killed. The
cross had four elements: the main tree, a small tree on which the feet are nailed, cross
three on which arms are fastened and hands are nailed, and an inscription above the main
tree. It was the providence of God according to Weemse that though the Romans
changed the form of this punishment, they did not change the tree, because it was
prophesied that the cursed should be hung on the tree. He who was condemned to
crucifixion carried the cross upon his neck from the judgment hall to the place of
execution. Christ alluded to this custom of carrying of the cross when he said “take up
your crosse and follow me.” It was their custom that when the condemned carried the
cross, a man walked in front of him and said: “this man goes forth to be put to this kinde
of death, for such and such crime, done in such a place, in such a time, before such
witnesses. If any man have any thing to say for his defence, let him come and speak
now.”

Civil punishment consisted of imprisonment, whipping, or mutilation. The
number of lashes was prescribed in the Law. Deuteronomy 25:3 says that stripes could
be no more than forty. In 2 Corinthians 11:24 Paul is said to have received five times the
forty stripes minus one. The reason they had thirty-nine stripes was that the whip they
used had three thongs, which was made of ox and ass leather. Thus, Jews said that “they
condemne him not but with whipps agreeable to the number of three.” The accused were

whipped thirteen blows with it, which made thirty-nine stripes. When a man was
condemned to take twenty stripes, he received six blows which made eighteen stripes.\footnote{118}

After describing the Jewish custom with some more details regarding whipping in
his Judicial Laws, Weemse concluded the section with spiritual lessons for the church.

The spiritual uses which wee are to make of these whippings, are first, as
they fitted the whip to the person... so the Lord layeth no more upon us
than we are able to beare... as the Judge stood by and numbered the strips;
so the Lord our God numbereth all the afflictions which befalleth his
children... so when the Lord correcteth us he counteth not basely of us,
but esteemes us as his children... so should we account these who are
afflicted, and the Lords hand upon them, to be still our brethren.\footnote{119}

The punishment with mutilation was the removal of the integral parts of the body
such as eyes and teeth, but not the vital parts nor the unessential parts such as hair or
nails. The judgment was governed by the principle “an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a
tooth.” The quality of corrective justice, however, was composed of principles “alike in
quality” and “alike in similitude.” Thus, when a man was struck and could not work, the
striker should pay him for four things: his pain, his shame, his healing, and his resting.
When a son strikes his father, he was not struck in the same way, but put to death. For, in
this case, though equality of the crime is in the matter, similitude is in action and passion.
Similarly, when a man struck his neighbor’s only eye and made him blind, he should lose
his both eyes. It is because he deprived his neighbor’s whole sight, thus the principle of
similitude is not kept but the principle of proportion. The Romans and Greeks used also

\footnote{118}{Weemse, Synagogue, in Works [1636], vol. 1, pp. 189-90.}

\footnote{119}{Weemse, Judicial Laws, in Works [1636], vol. 3, pp. 140-41.}
marking with hot iron on the skin of the malefactors. This is what the Apostle alluded
to when it was said that “I carry in my body, stigmata Christi.”\footnote{120}

e. Civil Contracts

For a contract to buy and sell land it was the Jewish custom for the buyer to write
two documents. The one he sealed with his own signature and the other he showed to the
witnesses so that they could witness to it. These two documents were identical except
one condition that the price of the land and the time of its redemption were concealed
from the witnesses. These two items were hidden from the witnesses in order to ensure
that “there was place still for the poore man to redeeme his land after the day.” These
two documents, the sealed and unsealed copy, are mentioned in Jer. 32:11-14.\footnote{121}

It was also their custom that a man clapped his hands in order to signify his
promise to restore things that were given to him to keep. Weemse translated
"(wallets) הChoשך הקופסה הפשירין" according to the Hebrew custom—“if he lye in clapping the hand.”
The words of Paul, “he is able to keepe that which I have committed to him” (II Tim.
1:12) alluded to this custom. Another form of the Hebrew custom in making contracts
was to use a shoe or glove as a sign of the contract they made. When the Jews made a
commercial contract, they used to put one of their shoes upon the other’s foot or their
glove upon their hands. Thus, the man who made the contract was called “bare-footed.”

\footnote{120}{Weemse, Synagogue, in \textit{Works} [1636], vol. 1, pp. 191-92.}

\footnote{121}{Weemse, Judicial Laws, in \textit{Works} [1636], vol. 3, pp. 112-13.}
It is not known, though, whether the “bare-footed” was a seller or buyer. Targum Jonathan described the seller of the contract by saying that “he pulled off his glove or shooe.” This custom was clearly alluded to in Ruth 4:7 which reads “… one party took off his sandal and gave it to the other. This was the method of legalizing transactions in Israel.” This custom is also mentioned in Ps. 60:8 that reads, according to Weemse’s translation, “over Edom I will cast my shooe.” This was the occasion when the Israelites took the possession of Edom.\textsuperscript{122}

f. Numbering, Weighing, and Measuring

In his treatise, *A Short Treatise of the Numbers, Weights and Measures, used by the Hebrews*, Weemse dealt with all the units of Hebrew numbers, weights, and measures in comparison with the Roman and Greek rules. This is one of the rare cases in which Weemse used non-canonical Scripture. He quoted from Wisdom 11 which says that God “made all things, in number; weight and measure.” From this quotation Weemse argued not only that all the things of God’s creation are under God’s providence and knowledge but also that they are systematically known by those three rules.

By these three the equity of all things is tryed out… These three are set downe by order of nature, for number or the distance of things must goe in the first place, by the which measure is found out; and number and measure find out weight; therefore wee must explaine the rules of numbers in the Scriptures, then the measure are arising from thence, and, thirdly, the weight, arising from them both.\textsuperscript{123}


The greatest unit of Hebrew measure was דְּלֵא, homer or corus. It contained as much dry or wet goods as a camel can bear at one time or as an ass can bear in two loads. This shows how great was the debt, one hundred corus of wheat, that the steward owed to his lord in Luke 16:7. It also shows how great Solomon’s house was, for which he consumed thirty corus of fine flour daily. The second unit דִּלֶת, letech, was half of a homer. This unit of measure is seen in Hosea 3:2. There the prophet Hosea was said to buy his adulterous wife with fifteen shekels of silver, a homer and a letech of barley, that was only a small amount of money. The third unit דְּפַס, epha, was the tenth of a homer. דְּס, seah, or satum was the third part of an epha and דְּפֶה, omer, a tenth of an epha. One omer was the measure which each of the Israelites had for this portion in the desert (Ex. 16:16). Paul alluded to this measure when he exhorted the Corinthians to relieve the poor church of Jerusalem which was in great trouble in persecution. דָּפ, cab, was the sixth part of a satum. A fourth part of cab was the measure of a man’s daily food. It is this portion of bread to which Christ alluded when he said that the steward gives the servants their food allowance in Luke 12. It is also part of what he taught believers to pray to God when they asked for “daily bread.”

In relation to measurement, the Hebrews had two principles: distributive justice which observed the medium Geometricum, and commutative justice which observed the medium Arithmeticum. Aristotle explained distributive justice with the example of serving guests. When one serves guests, one does not follow the principle of arithmetic

justice and provide an equal amount of bread to each guest, but according to their
needs. When Proverbs 30:8 reads “give us our measure of Bread,” the author sought
distributive justice, “for all should not be alike, but that every one should have foode [in
order to] meete for his condition.” In the same way, when Proverbs 31:15 said “she gives
by portion to her servants,” it meant the distributive measurement.

g. Marriage and Divorce

Buxtorf, Weemse, and Godwin also studied the Hebrew custom of marriage and
divorce. Their motives for describing it, however, were somewhat different from each
other. While Buxtorf concentrated on delineating the late sixteenth century marriage
practice, Weemse and Godwin related the description of the Jewish custom to
expounding the narratives of the Bible. Buxtorf’s work has many detailed descriptions,
but is marred by his tremendous bias. Regarding the girdles which bride and bridegroom
wore at their wedding, Buxtorf said that their reason to choose gold and silver was
“frivolous and foolish.” His description of the wedding banquet is bitter: “the rest of the
guests behaving themselves more like hungry dogs then men.” They ate food without
fork and knife, they snatched food even from their neighbor’s mouth; they threw raw
eggs at each other. In short, their banquet was full of “childish fooleries.”125

Compared to Buxtorf, Weemse’s and Godwin’s descriptions do not have such
disparaging comments about the Jewish customs. Though Weemse and Godwin shared a

125 Buxtorf, Jewish Synagogue, pp. 288-95.
positive view of the Hebrew marriage custom, their approach and goal are different from each other. While Godwin used more space to describe the customs, Weemse’s description of the custom itself is comparatively brief. But he focused more on subjects that have significant connotations for reading the Bible—the time of their marriage, the feast of marriage, the Hebrew concepts of virginity and the married woman, the wife and concubine, meanings of the veils that virgins and married women wore, the bill of divorce, bigamy and polygamy, and others.

Barrenness was regarded as a curse. For that reason virgins were not praised among the Hebrews and the house of marriage was called “the house of praise.” When women had children, “their reproach was said to be taken from them” (Luke 1:25). According to their older tradition, the virgins went around on the day of expiation and sang: “O yong men lift up your eyes, and see whom of us all ye will make choyce of, looke not to beauty, because it is decitfull, nor to riches, because they take their wings and fly away, but praise her who feareth the Lord.”¹²⁶ Virgins had veil on their faces as a token of their modesty. When they got married, the veil was replaced with another veil on their heads. The new veil on the head of married woman was a token of subjection. Therefore, when their husbands were suspicious about their wives, they were commanded to stand bare-headed before the priest until the suspicion was cleared.¹²⁷

¹²⁶ Weemse, Synagogue, in Works [1636], vol. 1, p. 201.
¹²⁷ Weemse, Synagogue, in Works [1636], vol. 1, p. 204.
Weemse described two kinds of wife, both lawful and true: the primary wife and the concubine. But each had different authority and status at home: the primary wife was the mistress of the house and the concubine had only “right unto the marriage bed.” The concubine was also a hand-maid or servant.\textsuperscript{128} The Hebrew marriage of the primary wife was “perfected by three things”: gifts, a matrimonial letter, and a wedding. The concubine enjoyed none of these.\textsuperscript{129} When a woman was married, she was entitled to request of her husband food, apparel, and cohabitation or the right of the bed. Paul’s words “the husband should fulfill his marital duty to his wife” alluded to this duty of the husband.\textsuperscript{130}

Weemse’s description of marriage in his Judicial Laws is arranged in such a way that all the ceremonies, people, and customs lead to theological lessons on the relationship of the church to Christ. Among the Jews there were three kinds of marriage: (1) \textit{usucapio}, when a man married a maid who had already stayed with him for a certain time, the case of David and Abishag; (2) \textit{per confarreationem}, when a man married the bride with the ceremony of breaking bread between them, the case of Hosea which signifies that he will dwell with his bride forever; and (3) \textit{per coemptionem}, when the bridegroom bought the bride but the bride gave little or no dowry to the bridegroom, the

\textsuperscript{128} Godwin, \textit{Moses and Aaron}, p. 229.

\textsuperscript{129} Weemse, Synagogue, in \textit{Works [1636]}, vol. 1, p. 203.

\textsuperscript{130} Godwin, \textit{Moses and Aaron}, pp. 235-36.
case of David and Michal. The latter two kinds typify the marriage between Christ and his church. The crowns that the bridegroom and bride wore are only types of the crown "which we shall get in the life to come." The "children of the wedding" who accompanied the bridegroom should not have fasted or mourned, alluding to Matt. 9:15. When, the morning after the wedding ceremony, the bridegroom came out of the wedding chamber with his bride, those who heard his voice rejoiced "because then the marriage was consummated." This is alluded in Psal. 19:5 and in John 3:29. In the former text, the sun is personified as the Bridegroom, Christ, who is coming out of his chamber.

Weemse concluded his description of Jewish marriage with theological edification.

Christ is called ἀνατολή, the Sunne rising from the East, that Sunne of righteousnesse comming out of the bosome of his Father, and out of his bed-chamber rising in the East, did shine upon the Iewes in the South, and next upon us Gentiles in the North... We are married to Iesus Christ per conurrectionem, when he gives us the blessed Sacrament... we are married to him per coemptionem... So we having nothing to bestow upon him, but he having pittie upon us when we were naked and uncomely... Thirdly, they sung praises and rejoiced at the marriage of the Bridegrome and the Bride. So let us bee glad and rejoice, and give honour unto him, for the marriage of the Lambe is come.

---

133 Weemse, Judicial Laws, in Works [1636], vol. 3, p. 128.
h. Life and the Sixth Commandment

Exodus 21:22 prescribes the law regarding miscarried unborn babies. Weemse translated the text, "If men strive and hurt a woman with child, so that her fruit depart from her, and yet no mischief follow, he shall be surely punished." This punishment depends on whether the child in the woman's womb is a living being or not. For the Hebrews, the baby is nothing but a seed for the first seven days. Life begins with the perfection of the fetus. When the fetus is perfected with all the important parts such as heart, brain, and arms, it is called "a living soul." The time when the soul animates the body corresponded for the Jews to the time when important parts of the body are formed, because they believed the soul lies in every part of the body to animate all of it. If the fetus is perfected in the thirty-five days after the conception, and thus the soul animates the body, the infant will begin to stir in the womb on the seventieth day. This baby will be born in the seventh month and thus is called septimestris. If the baby is perfected in the forty-fifth day, then the baby will begin to stir on the ninetieth day, and will be born in the ninth month. By doubling the days that took for the fetus to be perfected the Jews calculated the day when the baby will stir and the day it will be born.

The punishment prescribed in the text mentioned above should be judged according to this calculation when life begins. If the striker hurt a pregnant woman and

---

136 Weemse, Observation, in Works [1636], vol. 1, pp. 65-68; idem, Portraiture, in Works [1636], vol. 1, pp. 51-59.

she aborts but lives, he shall be punished. If the unborn baby was a living being, the
striker should surely die. However, if the unborn baby was not a living being yet but that
"which falleth from the tree before it be ripe," the striker will not die for it.\textsuperscript{138}

Since Weemse's biblical interpretation was a churchly, pre-critical reading, he
never missed an opportunity to draw spiritual and moral edification out of his description
of Hebrew tradition. He drew a spiritual and moral lesson from his description of
digamy, polygamy, and adultery. "Christ hath but one wife (his Church,) so should the
faithfull man have but one wife."\textsuperscript{139} After the description of the Hebrew custom of
dealing with human corpses, Weemse said:

The clearer the Doctrine of the Resurrection is, the fewer of these
ceremonies should be used in buriall; they onely washed the body of
Tabitha, and laide it in the upper Chamber, Act.9.36.38. and the Apostle
seemes to allude to this sort of washing, when hee sayes, What shall they
doe then, who are baptized for the dead... Man after his fall, his body was
covered, but because there remained some sparkles of the image of God in
his face, the face is uncovered: but after death they cover the face also; to
let us see then, that all the glory is gone.\textsuperscript{140}

\textsuperscript{138} Weemse, \textit{Observation}, in \textit{Works [1636]}, vol. 1, pp. 63-64; idem, \textit{Moral Law II}, in \textit{Works [1636]}, vol. 2,
p. 97.


Chapter Seven

Theory and Practice:
Interpretation and Sense of Scripture

Interpretation of Scripture, for seventeenth-century Protestants, was more than simply stating the grammatical meaning of words; it was ultimately meant to give the intended sense of the author of Scripture. This is why the sense of Scripture was called the “spiritual meaning” of the text or the “will of God.” Special gift is required for attaining to the right interpretation of Scripture. Reading the words ὀφθαλμοῦντα τὸν λόγον τῆς ἀληθείας (cutting straight the word of truth) in II Timothy 2:15 as an allusion to right cutting up of sacrifices in the temple, Weemse emphasizes that “so there is great skill requisite in cutting of the Word of God, to give every one their owne Portion.”¹ Scripture that is not interpreted to the people, says Weemse, in another analogy, is like a nut not broken. Interpretation in Hebrew, as in Judges 7:15 “when Gideon heard the dream and its interpretation,” is גדרה, “the breaking of it.” This language is borrowed from breaking a nut. As a nut must be broken to be used, “so the Scriptures must bee broken for the people, and cut up for their understanding.” It was synagogue practice that reading of the Law and the Prophets was immediately followed by interpretation of the text. Thus, the synagogue was called כורחו “house of interpretation.” The church is,

¹Weemse, Synagogue, in Works [1636], vol. 1, p. 283.
therefore, Weemse argues, not merely the house that keeps the Word of God but also the house in which the preacher interprets the Word of God and preaches it to the people of God.\(^2\) The intimate connection between interpretation and synagogue explains why Weemse titled his major work the *Christian Synagogue*.

Weemse says that there are three important means to attain the right sense of Scripture. They are translation, paraphrase, and interpretation of Scripture—the three that occupied the central place in his philological study of Scripture. Translation and paraphrase, according to Weemse, should lead to the final goal of reading Scripture—interpretation, that is, understanding the whole, entire meaning of Scripture.\(^3\)

Although the Protestant doctrine of Scripture included, against the Catholics, both perspicuity of the sense of Scripture and inner harmony within it, it did not make interpretation unnecessary. All the Christian scholars of the age recognized the complexities of Scripture interpretation. Thus, in a sense, a certain scholarly scrutiny of the biblical text was regarded as a necessary step toward the perspicuity and harmony of the right sense of Scripture. Sanderson, a seventeenth-century preacher said: “The well is deep and our buckets for want of cordage will not reach the bottom.” The difficulty, according to Sanderson, as for other orthodox scholars, lies in human weakness and not

---

\(^1\) Weemse, *Exercitations*, in *Works* [1636], vol. 3, p. 162; Cf. in a similar fashion Perkins defines interpretation as “opening of the wordes and sentences of the Scripture” in *The Arte of Prophecying*, *Works* [1609], vol. 2, p. 737.

in Scripture itself. What compensates human weakness in its effort to reach to the right sense of Scripture is what Weemse calls the various means that the Lord provided to make its sense clear to his church.

The hermeneutical change in the early seventeenth century led many Protestant orthodox theologians to write volumes on introduction to the Bible and manuals on its sense. Weemse’s hermeneutical introduction to Scripture and his exegetical practice are to be evaluated among and compared with these works of similar nature of the seventeenth century. Among these works, Andreas Hyperius’ *The Practic of Preaching* (1577) and William Perkins’ *The Art of Prophecying* (1609) were the earliest biblical hermeneutic manuals written by English scholars. Written in the early years of the 1630s, Weemse’s *Christian Synagogue* and *Divine Exercitations* stood as two of the most scholarly works in the period. Other widely read English hermeneutical manuals and introductions to the Bible among the early seventeenth-century works were, besides these above-mentioned authors, Thomas Tailor’s *Christ Revealed* (1635); John White’s *A Way to the Tree of Life* (1647); John Smith’s *The Mystery of Rhetoric Unveiled* (1665); Henry Lukin’s *An Introduction to the Holy Scripture* (1669), and Samuel Mather’s *Old

---


5 Andreas Hyperius’ (Gerardus), *The Practic of Preaching... Conteyning an excellent method how to frame sermons*, tr. J. Ludham, London, 1577.

Testament Types (1673). All of these works were inspired by various continental scholars. Much of Perkins’ is a digest from Flacius Illyricus’ *Clavis Scripturae*. Lukin specifically ascribed his influence to the Lutheran Solomon Glassius’ *Philologia Sacra*. Smith’s understanding of typology and allegory is definitely from Glassius. The most significant influence made by Glassius among English authors is found in Benjamin Keach’s *Tropologia* (1681), which is actually a redaction of *Philologia Sacra*.

This chapter will discuss issues of identification of the literal sense of Scripture and its relation to the churchly, spiritual significance in Reformed orthodox theology, with special concern for Weemse’s formulation. It will show diversity in method of interpretation within the post-Reformation Reformed circle that was caused by the long process of experiment in formulating the Protestant method of defining the literal sense and of delimiting the relationship between the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament.

---

7 Perkins, *Art of Prophecying*, in *Works* [1609], vol. 2, pp. 736-52; Thomas Tailor, *Christ Revealed: or the Old Testament Explained. A Treatise of the Types and Shadows of our Saviour contained throughout the whole Scripture: All opened and made usefull for the benefit of God’s Church*, London, 1635; John White, *A Way to the Tree of Life: Discovered in Sundry Directions for the Profitable Reading of the Scriptures: Wherein is described occasionally The nature of a Spiritual Man…*, London, 1647; John Smith, *The Mysterie of Rhetorique Unveiled, Wherein above 130 The Tropes and Figures are severally derived from the Greek into English; together with lively Definitions and Variety of Latin, English, Scriptural Examples… to the right understanding of the Sense of the Letter of the Scripture…*, London, 1665; Henry Lukin, *An Introduction to the Holy Scripture, Containing the several Tropes, Figures, Proprieties of Speech used therein; with other Observations, necessary for the right Understanding thereof*, London, 1669; Samuel Mather, *Old Testament Types Explained and Improved*, London, 1673; Besides these manuals, Jeremy Taylor wrote a treatise on biblical interpretation that is contained in his sermon “The Minister’s Duty in Life and Doctrine” (ca. 1653-55), in *Works* [1828], vol. 6, pp. 507-32.

8 Flacius Illyricus, *Clavis Scripturae Sacra*, 1567, reprinted at Jena in 1674.


10 Benjamin Keach, *Tropologia: A Key to Open Scripture Metaphors, in four books, to which are prefixed, Arguments to Prove the Divine Authority of the Holy Bible together with Types of the Old Testament*, London, 1680, reissued in 1769.
Underlying this process was the Protestant struggle with the medieval remains of the *quadriga* and the new philological and textual demands placed on the exegete by Renaissance learning on the one hand, and with the use of Jewish literature for Christian biblical interpretation, on the other.

The central issue at this point was how to identify precisely the needed interpretive process that moves from the single literal sense to possibly diverse spiritual signification which had been known from the medieval period as allegorical, tropological, and anagogical. The issues of precisely identifying the literal sense and its relationship to spiritual signification found their refinement in England in the works of Perkins, Whitaker, and Weemse. The rest of this chapter will analyze Weemse’s understanding of the issues in dialogue with other authors. This will uncover, first of all, a sophisticated Reformed conception of the literal sense, secondly, the pre-modern reading of Scripture, and lastly, diversity concerning an interpretive approach among the orthodox theologians, even within the same orthodox doctrine of Scripture.

1. Hebrew Literary Convention

Philological study comprises the first step of Weemse’s effort of establishing the right sense of Scripture. The Hebrew property of speech in Scripture must be closely

---

11 These three different senses were for long used as aspects of spiritual signification in the medieval theology. When Old Testament is figuratively mentioned in the New, it was called the allegorical sense; when something is done or not done, the tropological or moral sense; and when something is alluded to the heavenly realm, the anagogical sense.
observed, for Scripture was written with peculiar Hebrew idioms. "For in the Hebrew it will signifie one thing, and in other languages, another thing." The New Testament, though written in Greek, usually followed this Hebraism of the Old Testament. Hosea 8:8 reads כְּכֶלָי אִירֹן וְרֶב, "as a vessel there is no pleasure in it." This Hebrew idiom is followed by Paul in Romans 9:21 where he says ποιήσαι ὃ μὲν εἰς τιμὴν σκέφτομαι, ὁ δὲ εἰς ἀτιμίαν, "to make this to honor vessel, that to dishonor." I Thessalonians 4:4 also has a glimpse to the Hebrew idiom, when it reads "how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor."†

Sometimes, the intended meaning is contrary to the literal sense of the words. Jeremiah 48:15, which Weemse reads "Moab is spoyled and gone up out of her cities," meant that the city was destroyed. Similarly, Christ's words "let this cuppe passe over me" means "let it not touch me." Sometimes Scripture expresses a certain sense with its opposite meaning, when the intended meaning impairs the holy name of God, such as swearing. "Naboth had blessed God," בָּרָךְ נָבוֹתָה מִלָּה, (I Kings 21:13) was to mean, by

† Weemse, Exercitations, in Works [1636], vol. 3, p. 102; See also Ainsworth, "Preface," in Annotations upon the Pentateuch where he said: "The literal sense of Moses Hebrew, (which is the tongue wherein he wrote the Law,) is the ground of all interpretation; and that language hath figures and proprieties of speech, different from ours: those therefore in the first place are to be opened; that the naturall meaning of the Scripture being knowne, the mysteries of godlinessse therein implied, may the better be discerned."

† Weemse, Exercitations, in Works [1636], vol. 3, p. 103.

† Weemse, Exercitations, in Works [1636], vol. 3, p. 103.
ideological alteration, "Naboth cursed God." Similarly, by saying יֵשְׁבֵּא אֵלֶּה סְפִּירָה, "bless God and die" (Job 2:9) Job's wife meant "curse God and die."\textsuperscript{15}

Weemse dealt with the subject of Hebrew literary convention in two parts: in the "sense of the Scriptures" in \textit{Christian Synagogue}\textsuperscript{16} and "the stile of the Scriptures" in \textit{Exercitations}.\textsuperscript{17} In the section of \textit{Exercitations Divine}, Weemse illustrates ten principles of philological study and their applications in reading Scripture: physical condition of speaking, specific languages of Scripture, various dialects, genre of Scripture writings, styles of speech, New Testament's use of the Hebrew speech of the Old Testament, peculiar New Testament speech which are not found in other Greek writings, fullness of speech, shortness of speech, and coherence of speech in Scripture.\textsuperscript{18} Ample exegetical practices based on this philological study of the Hebrew literary styles are found in all of his books.

\textbf{a. Vivid Expression}

Sometimes Scripture uses actions, especially in references to God's judgment, "as if a man were looking on with his eyes." The narratives of deluge, the overthrow of Sodom, and miracles in the wilderness are set down "so clearly before us, as if we had


beene eye witnesses of them.” Psalms 7:12-13 expresses the judgment of God on the wicked as if the reader were looking on: “if hee turne not he will whet his sword, hee hath bent his bow, and made it ready, hee hath also prepared for him the instruments of death; hee hath ordained his arrowes against the persecutors.”

The Hebrew Bible states something is to be done when the thing is only “foretold or declared to be done.” Lukin illustrated examples from the Bible. Genesis 27:37 says “I have made him thy Lord,” when it is foretold so, and Genesis 35:12 reads “I gave the land Abraham and Isaac,” when it means that “I promised to give.” The words “justify” in Psalms 51:4, “sanctify” in Numbers 20:13, and “glorify” in Leviticus 10:3 should be understood in the same way. Other times the Hebrew Bible says things to be done which only “seem or are reputed so to be.” Still in other cases it says that something to be done “which ought to be done.” When Proverbs 16:13 reads “righteous lips are the delight of Kings,” it means they “should” be. “A son honours his father” (Malachi 1:6) means that “sons should do it.” In order to show certainty, the Hebrews used the imperative mood for the future tense. “Seek the Lord and live” (Amos 5:6) means “ye shall certainly live.” However, they sometimes used the future tense instead of the imperative mood. The Decalogue begins with “you shall not …” instead of “do not …”

---


20 Lukin, Introduction, pp. 52-59.

21 Smith, Mysterie of Rhetorique,” p. 214.
b. Counting the Numbers

Acts 2:41 reads “about three thousand were added to their number that day.” The Questioner asked, is not the number of all things not known to God? Weemse answered: first, the exact number is of “little matter,” to the purpose of Scripture and secondly, the Lord spoke to us “after the manner of men.” Scripture is written in the manner of Hebrew literature. The number of judges in the Jewish first judicatory was seventy-two, that is, six persons out of each tribe. However, “making round the number,” they were called “seventy.” The same was true for the seventy-two disciples called the seventy in Luke 10:1.

Sometimes “all” in Scripture, as Jerome remarked, is often taken “indefinitely for many.” It may signify “some” or “many.” Thus, when I Chronicles 29:30 reads “all the kingdomes of the Countries,” it did not mean all the countries, but “next adjacent countries.” Similarly, Isaiah’s words “all mankind will come and bow down before me” and Matthew’s words that Christ healed “every disease” did not mean what they literally signify, but a great multitude and many diseases, respectively.

---


24 Weemse, *Exercitations*, in *Works [1636]*, vol. 3, pp. 121-22; see also p. 103 for the cases in which “many” was used to signify “few.”

c. Repetition of Phrases

In his section expounding the first Commandment, Weemse attempted to uncover the intended meaning of Deuteronomy 6:5 “thou shalt love the Lord with all thine heart, soule, and might.” In Mark the injunction of love is expanded to “with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.” In order to show the intended meaning Weemse explained a Hebrew form of literary convention, which is also followed in the New Testament, namely, the repetition of words and phrases. Scripture sometimes repeats the same words in order to express increased affection of the author and signification of the words. In Genesis 25:30 Esau is described as imploring Jacob with repeated words, יְלַעֲנֵנִי אֶל מֶלֶךְ אַגְוָרָה יְדֵךְ, “feed me I pray thee with that red pottage that red pottage.” Here, said Weemse, “doubling of the same words intendeth both the affection of Esau, and the signification of the words.” But, when the repeated words are not the same but diverse, it intends either to express both the author’s affection and signification of the words or to increase only the affection of the author but not the signification of the words. An example of the latter case is Exodus 32:6, “the people sat downe to eate and drinke, and rose up to play.” The words “sat down,” “eat,” “drink,” and “play,” which are connected with conjunctions, do increase the affection of the people—how they were earnest in idolatry, but do not increase the signification of each word. The former case is one in which the repetition increases both affection and signification. One such example is Luke 17:27, which reads ἦσθιον, ἰννο,
εγάμουν, εγαμίζοντο, “they did eate, they dranke, they married wives, they were
given in marriage.” The repetition of the diverse words, without conjunction, emphasizes
both the affection of the author and signification of the words.\textsuperscript{26}

They [the words] are set downe here without any conjunction, after the
manner of the Hebrews; for the Hebrews when they would expresse their
earnest desire about a businesse, they set downe their words without a
conjunction: but when diverse words are set downe with a conjunction,
then they intend not the signification, but onely the affection.\textsuperscript{27}

When the diverse words are connected with a conjunction, as in Exodus 32:6, the
intended meaning is only the affection of the author, thus, the significance of the different
words does not need to be pursued. The injunction of love in Deuteronomy 6:5 and Mark
12:30 belongs to this case. Words in both texts are connected with conjunctions \textit{\textit{καὶ}}
and \textit{καὶ}. Therefore, concluded Weemse on the meaning of the love injunction:

\textit{wee} are not here curiously to seeke how these words differ, but to
understand; that we should love the Lord, not onely comparatively, or
appreatiavely; but both intensively and extensively, as far as we can; and
as the sunne-beames gathered together and united in a Cristall glasse,
burne the hoter; So all the affections gathered together and united, make
the love the more fervent.\textsuperscript{28}

d. Solecism

Weemse indicates that spiritual status is often reflected by literal terms in
Hebrew. Thus, when Weemse explained cases of punishment prescribed for children


who followed their fathers' wickedness, he said that the word "father" in Scripture means father by either natural birth or example. The same is true for children—they are either by natural birth or by imitation. When it is said "you are of your father devil," the "father" means the father by example. II Chronicles 28:19 reads "Ahaz king of Israel," while in fact Ahaz was king of Judah. The masoretic scribes put Ahaz as king of Israel, for he followed the kings of Israel. He was the king of Israel by imitation.  

When Judges 18:30 says "Jonathan son of Gershom, the son of Manasseh," "son" here reflects Jonathan's spiritual status rather than his natural status. Jonathan is Moses' natural grandson, but is called the son of Manasseh in the masoretic text by imitation. It was the Hebrew scribal tradition to alter the name so that they could maintain the spiritual integrity of the patriarchs. The scribes made Jonathan the son of Manasseh, changing מַעַשֶּׂה to מָכָּה by "lifting up of a letter," that is, the letter י.  

In Hebrew, spiritual status also reflects on the sexual images and thus on grammatical genders. It is no wonder that masculine gender was regarded as superior over the feminine in the biblical literature. Paul writes καὶ ἔσονται οἱ δύο εἰς σάρκα μίαν, "and the two shall be one flesh," with its subject οἱ δύο, "the two," in masculine gender. It is because, said Weemse, "the man is the more excellent sexe." Because man is the higher gender, woman is put first in the account of transgression. For the same

---


reason Numbers 12:1 records “Miriam and Aaron spoke against Moses,” and not “Aaron and Miriam.”

However, when Scripture speaks in praise of woman, or “when women behave themselves like men,” it uses masculine gender rather than feminine. Esther 1:20 reads אנה נ البرلمשה תֶשֶׁר יִשְׁרְאֵל, “all the wives shall give honour to their husbands.” Though the subject here is feminine, the verb is Qal, imperfect, third person, masculine plural. In a similar manner, Naomi said to Ruth, her daughter in law, כל הענק stuff הממון, הממון, “as you have done with the dead and with me” (Ruth 1:8). The verb בְּשָׁם is Qal, perfect, second person, masculine plural, not feminine.

The opposite cases are also found in Scripture. When man is said to be in feminine affection, for example in anxiety, feminine gender was used instead of masculine. In Numbers 11:15 Moses cries to God in anxiety, “and if thou deale thus with me, kill me I pray thee,” אִי זָמֵה אוּסְיֶשׁ אל תְּרוֹנְי אָנְאִי. Here Moses spoke of God in the feminine gender, אין יָשֵׁשׁ, with the second person personal pronoun, feminine singular instead of masculine gender. It is because, said Weemse, Moses was “being troubled in minde.”

---


e. The Hebrew Says Less and Understands More.

Ainsworth also explained that there was an occasional “defect of words” in the Hebrew Bible, by which he did not mean that the Bible was not perfect but that it was written in Hebrew idioms. “I in scorpions” in II Chronicles 10:11 should be read in the context, in comparison with I Kings 12:11 which clarifies it further “I will chastise you with scorpions.” While II Kings 25:3 says “in the ninth of the moneth,” Jeremiah 52:6 clarified it by providing which month, saying “in the fourth moneth, in the ninth of the moneth.” For this reason, said Ainsworth, “translators doe sometime adde words… for the originall tongue affecteth brevity; but we desire and need plainnesse of speech.”

Similarly, Weemse insists on attention to peculiarities of Hebrew idiom when translating and interpreting. When it is said in Proverbs 17:21 “the father of the foolish rejoyceth not,” it means that he is very sad. That “it is not good to accept persons in judgement” (Proverbs 24:23) means it is very evil. The words in Matthew 12:32 “it shall not be remitted in this life, nor in the life to come” mean that it shall certainly be punished.

Speeches in Scripture sometimes include a double sense expressed in either logical equivocation or mental reservation. Logical equivocation is used in Genesis 40 where the same word “lifting up” is used to express both the restoration of Pharaoh’s cup-bearer to his former position and execution of his baker. It is also used in Luke 9:60 “let the dead bury their dead.” The former “dead” means, says Weemse, those who are

---

31 Ainsworth, “Preface,” in Annotations upon Genesis.
35 Weemse, Synagogue, in Works [1636], vol. 1, p. 251; idem, Moral Law I, in Works [1636], vol. 2, p. 191.
spiritually dead, while the latter “dead” are those who are naturally dead.\footnote{Weemse, \textit{Moral Law II}, in \textit{Works [1636]}, vol. 2, p. 270.} The other type of equivocation is mental reservation with which a “speech is patched up, and the one part is expressed, and the other part is reserved in the minde of the speaker.”\footnote{Weemse, \textit{Moral Law II}, in \textit{Works [1636]}, vol. 2, pp. 272-73.} This type of equivocation is found in lies and false prophecies.\footnote{Weemse, \textit{Moral Law II}, in \textit{Works [1636]}, vol. 2, p. 273.}

\textbf{f. Affirmative and Negative Statements}

Weemse indicates that Scripture uses a double affirmation in order to affirm a thing emphatically, such as “amen, amen.” For the same effect, Scripture can also put both affirmation and negation of its denial. “Let Reuben live and not die” (Deuteronomy 33:6) means that he will certainly live. “He who curseth his Father and his Mother, and blesseth them not” (Proverbs 30:11) signifies a man who certainly curses his parents.\footnote{Weemse, \textit{Synagogue}, in \textit{Works [1636]}, vol. 1, pp. 236-39.}

Sometimes negative statements in Scripture do not deny, but make a comparison. When Genesis 32:28 says “ye shall not be called Iacob, but Israel,” it means that “ye shall be rather called Israel than Iacob.” “I will have mercy, and not sacrifice” should be read similarly as “I will have rather mercy than sacrifice.” Some negative statements simply talk about the mode rather than deny. John 16:24 “hitherto ye have asked nothing in my name” means that “ye have not directly asked in my name.” For they asked
indirectly when they were with the Ark, but they did not ask directly in Christ’s name.

Some of the negative statements in Scripture deny only what the audience thought.

What Matthew 22:32, “he is not the God of the dead but of the living,” denies is what the Sadducees thought about resurrection. It talks about the dead “whom the Sadducees thought dead, who should never rise again.” When Scripture says “it is not my doctrine, but his who sent me,” it means that “it is not mine as ye take me to be a meere man.”

When the note of denial is put with the verb, the negative statement denies wholly. Psalms 14:3 is a good example of this negation.

אֵין לְמָהָרֹס אָנָה ָם, “There is none that does good, no, not one.”

The emphatic negation of this statement is explained by the phrase that follows, “no, not one.” When the negative note is put with a particle, it does not deny universally, as in “not everyone that says to me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom” (Matthew 7:21).

When the note of denial is set between the finite and infinite verbs, it denies also emphatically. Genesis 3:3 has a note of negation between the two verbs.

אָדָם אֵלָהַהַ לְאֵלָהַ, עָמַּדְתִּי לוֹ אַלָּא מַעַּשְּׂרֵךְ מֵאָדָם, “God said, you shall not eat from it, neither shall you touch it lest you die.”

By the rule of contradiction, Weemse argued, if a negative is true, its affirmative must be false. By the same rule, from a double negation there will follow a double affirmation, and the opposite case will also be true. But, from a double negation, it does

---

40 Weemse, Synagogue, in Works [1636], vol. 1, pp. 238-39; For a similar study see Lukin, Introduction, pp. 66-70.

41 Weemse, Synagogue, in Works [1636], vol. 1, pp. 240-41.
not follow an affirmative and a negative. From the statement, “Some sinnes are neither remitted in this life, nor in the life to come,” (Matthew 12:32) it may follow that some sins are remitted both in this life and in the life to come. But, it does not follow that some sins are not remitted in this life, but in the life to come,” as Catholics argued for purgatory.\(^{42}\)

Weemse was well aware of the literary convention that negative precepts bind more strictly than affirmative precepts.

The schoolemen say well, that affirmative precepts doe not so straightly binde a negatives doe: Affirmativa ligant semper, sed non ad semper, negativa ligant semper & ad semper: the affirmatives binde not simply without intermission, but the negative precepts binde without intermission.\(^{43}\)

Thus, while an affirmative precept may have an exception, there is no exception for negative precepts. To the Hebrews there could be no exceptional case for the commandment “ye shall not bow before an idol.” Thus, “if a man were standing before an Idoll, it were not lawfull for him to bow himself to tye the latcher of his shoe before it, although it were not his purpose to worship it.” However, there could be exceptions to the fourth commandment, “ye shall keepe the Sabbath.” It was lawful for the Hebrews to

\(^{42}\) Weemse, *Synagoge*, in *Works* [1636], vol. 1, pp. 241-42.

do some servile works on the Sabbath, if it was for the honor of God or work of necessity.\textsuperscript{44}

g. Language for God and Spiritual Matters

Next Weemse notes that Scriptural language for God is accommodated to human understanding. “Unlesse the Lord speake to us by things which we are most acquainted with,” we humans cannot know God. In Mark 1:32, the “holy Ghost useth this phrase,” “the sunne was dipping: because to those who dwell about the Sea-side, the Sunne seems to dip in the Sea when it goes downe.”\textsuperscript{45} Christ changed the word “elephant” in the Talmudic proverb to “camel” “it is easier for an Elephant to goe through a needles eye.” It is because that the people in Judea was more acquainted with camels than elephants.\textsuperscript{46} Calvin talked about this accommodated nature of language for God as the “lisping” of God: indeed Weemse offers evidences that the principle of accommodation was a standard element of Protestant biblical interpretation.\textsuperscript{47}

Not only human natural, or intellectual, incapacity but also spiritual infidelity caused the accommodated nature of language for God. In order to accommodate

\textsuperscript{44} Weemse, \textit{Synagoge}, in \textit{Works} [1636], vol. 1, p. 89; Lukin, \textit{Introduction}, pp. 182-84.


“naturall infidelity in man, to misbeleeve,” God used some expressions excessive or
defective in Scripture. An example of the former case is from John 21:25 “if all that
Christ had done were written, the world would not containe it,” and an example of the
latter case is from Psalms 22:6 “I am a worme and not a man.”

Language for God in Scripture is by its nature analogical language, for there is no
direct access to know God. Though humans cannot know God as he is, they can have
indirect knowledge of God by way of analogy. It is also accommodated language, since
human language is not adequate to describe spiritual and godly matters. When Weemse
said the following, he clearly alluded to Thomas Aquinas’ treatise of the language for
God: “although we cannot conceive him fully, as he is; yet when by way of Analogie, we
are led by these outward things, that he is a Spirit, who sees all by his eyes; that he is a
Spirit, who hath all power, by his hands.”

The analogical knowledge of God is achieved in three ways: by negating the
things visible, by considering the causes of things, and by considering eminence in
things. Since language for God in Scripture is analogical, it is either anthropomorphic or
metaphorical, and therefore accommodated to human capacity.

The Scripture speakes of God, humanitus, borrowing from man sundry
things. 1. Hands, feet, eyes, are attribute to God, per ἀνθρωπομορφεῖαν. 2.
Passions, as joy, anger, repentance, per ἀνθρωποποιαθείαν. 3. It brings
him in, sitting in judgement after the manner of men, per ἐθιοπείαν...

---

48 Weemse, Synagoge, in Works [1636], vol. 1, p. 251.
This teacheth us that we cannot take up God, but according to our weake capacitie, and by things that we are best acquainted with.\textsuperscript{50}

The metaphor used to describe God and spiritual matters proceeds "from sensible things to spiritual, and not contrarily." For example, \textit{sheol}, or \textit{haides}, is to be understood by way of analogical pattern. It means first grave, and then metaphorically signifies the state of the damned, not the other way around, as the Papists argued.\textsuperscript{51}

Now that language attributed to God is analogical, the Hebrews attributed to God the highest possible status they could imagine. This pattern of language led them to augment "divine" or "God's" to the things which they wanted to express in a superlative case. Thus, a high mountain was expressed as "God's mountain" and a tall cedar "God's cedar." The phrase "Moses was fair to God" means that he was very fair. This pattern of Hebrew language teaches, said Weemse, that "when wee see any excellent thing in the creatures, let us not rest there; but elevate our minds to the infinite beautie and greatnesse that is in God."\textsuperscript{52}

\textbf{h. Use of Modest Language}

The Jewish scribes thought that, since the Hebrew tongue is the holy language that God has used, the purity of Scripture should not be damaged by natural or spiritual

\textsuperscript{50} Weemse, \textit{Synagogue}, in \textit{Works [1636]}, vol. 1, p. 243


\textsuperscript{52} Weemse, \textit{Synagogue}, in \textit{Works [1636]}, vol. 1, pp. 244-45; Smith, \textit{Mysterie of Rhetorique}, pp. 214-15; Henry Lukin, in \textit{Introduction}, pp. 147-48, was aware of that another superlative form in Hebrew added the word "firstborn." "The firstborn of the poor" (Isa. 14:30) means the most poor.
uncleanness. In Scripture modest language was used in order to suppress filthy and evil things. From this pattern of biblical language, says Weemse, “let us study to be modest in our words, as well as to be holy in our actions.” Human genital parts were expressed with circumlocution. The male genital organ was called “nakedness,” “flesh,” “thigh,” or “feet,” and the female organ was called “fountain,” “her thigh,” or “her cistern.” In a similar manner, easing nature was expressed by “covering his feet” in Judges 3:24. Deuteronomy 23:13 says “when thou goest to the field” instead of “when you go to ease nature.” Targum said it as “doing his needs.”

Adultery and other sinful behaviors were also expressed in modest terms. “If ye had not plowed with my Heifer” in Judges 14:18 means “if ye had not lyen with Delila.” In Latin, an adulterer was called agricola and adultery was known as “tilling another man’s ground.” This agricultural image of adultery is also found in Scripture, such as “grinding grain” in Job 31:10. It is also expressed as “stolen water” (Proverbs 9:17) and “eating and wiping out” (Proverbs 20:30).

Idolatry or spiritual adultery were termed in the same pattern. Scripture expresses it in plain terms as “thou hast spred thy legs under every greene tree” in Ezekiel 16 and “thy issue was the issue of an horse” in twenty third chapter of the same book. This

---


pattern of Scriptural language teaches us, said Weemse, that “idolatry is such a subtle thing, that we cannot take it up, as we doe bodily whoredome, therefore the Lord expresses it in plaine terms, that we may abhorre it the more.”

However, sometimes Scripture uses harsh language, an opposite pattern of modest language, in reference to idolatry and heathen gods. The people of Ekron called their god Baalzebhah, the god of sacrifice. But, God is said to ridicule the god with contempt Baalzebub, the god of flies. Similarly, Christ called him Baalzebul, the god of dung. In a like manner, the Mount of Olives הַר הַמַּעֲרָב, “the hill of spoil,” was called by Christ הַר הַנַּחַל, “the hill of corruption,” because idolatry was set up there.

The use of modest language in Scripture teaches a number of things to Christians. First, believers should avoid speaking of filthy things; second, they should honor the shameful parts of human body; third, idolatry is such a sinful thing that believers may abhor it the more by not referring to it in plain terms; fourth, they should keep in mind how contemptible idolatry is; and fifth, they should abhor cursing each other. For these practical reason, says Weemse, translation should use modest terms instead of spiritually contemptible terms.

---

56 Weemse, Synagogue, in Works [1636], vol. 1, pp. 248-49.
57 Weemse, Synagogue, in Works [1636], vol. 1, p. 249.
2. The Sense of Scripture and Its Application

The foundation of Weemse’s biblical interpretation is the study of the language of Scripture. He divides the method of proper interpretation into three groups:

In the Scriptures there are three things to be considered. First, the Languages in which they were written. Secondly, the sealing up of these books into the Canon that his penmen wrote, when they were immediately inspired by God. Thirdly, the helps and means that God hath ordained to come to the right Sense of the Scriptures. 59

This threefold scheme provides the overarching structure to his Christian Synagogue.

The first book in the Christian Synagogue begins with the chapter “the ordinary means how God revealed himself to his people, and in what language the Bookes of the Old and New Testaments were written” and proceeds to deal with five means (or helps) of understanding the sense of Scripture, which have been discussed in the previous chapters in this dissertation. The second book provides a separate examination of the right sense of Scripture. This section of the sense of Scripture is supplemented by another separate section in Exercitations Divine. 60 And the third book deals with a practical application of the doctrines drawn from the philological study of Scripture.

59 Weemse, Synagogue, in Works [1636], vol. 1, p. 30.

60 Weemse, Exercitations, in Works [1636], vol. 3, pp. 177-88.
a. Full and Entire Literal Sense

Weemse’s discussion of the sense of Scripture begins with his argument against the Jews as well as Catholics. Jews understood, according to Weemse, every passage of Scripture to have both a literal and a mystical sense: the literal sense they called Dabhar katon, rem parvam (the poor sense) and mystical sense Dabhar gadol, rem magnam (the great sense). Weemse is here exceedingly oversimplifying the range of Jewish Bible interpretation. He mentions only the mystical, Cabbalist reading of Jewish biblical scholarship and does not say a word about their tradition of literal interpretation.\(^{61}\) It is probably because his aim in the section was to denounce the Jewish tradition of reading Scripture and to uphold the Protestant understanding of the literal sense of Scripture. But it is important to remember that there was a strong tradition in the Jewish community to interpret the Hebrew Bible literally, a tradition represented by Rashi, Ibn Ezra, and David Kimchi in the medieval period; a tradition which Weemse must have been aware of.

Second, Weemse presents the Catholic practice of drawing diverse senses: “most of the Schoolemen” derived “a double sense” in Scripture. They called the former pauperem and grammaticum (an impoverished and grammatical sense) and the latter divitem and theologicum (an enriched and theological sense). The grammatical sense is to be “broken” to yield a higher and spiritual sense of Scripture. The medieval practice of allegorical interpretation regarded Scripture as materiam primam, the primary, or raw,

material from which all the spiritual senses may be derived. Weemse restricts the medieval practice of interpretation, as he does with the Jewish tradition, to the mystical understanding of Scripture, leaving aside the tradition of Nicholas of Lyra and Paul of Burgos that regarded the literal sense as the primary signification of Scripture.

Against the Jews and Catholics, Weemse insists, along with other Protestant orthodox, that "There is but one literall sense in the Scriptures, which is profitable for doctrine, for reprove, for correction, for instruction in righteousness... we must strive to finde out the literall sense of the Scriptures, or else we shall never come by the true meaning." The literal sense is the single, true sense of Scripture and the spiritual or mystical senses that were practiced in the medieval tradition are not the proper sense but diverse applications of the single literal sense. Even so, if Scripture is self-interpreting, in and through the work of the Spirit in the Word, then the Spirit-intended-sense must be clearly known to the believer. The theological conviction of Scripture's self-interpretation formulated a significant Reformed principle of biblical perspicuity: "the Scripture must be interpreted by the same Spirit, by which it was inspired." The sense

---


63 Weemse, Exercitations, in Works [1636], vol. 3, pp. 177-78.

of Scripture that was composed and intended by the Spirit and interpreted by the same
Spirit is the single literal sense.

The delimitation of the literal sense must be grounded on a proper understanding
of word, otherwise the foundation of sense is lost. The sense of a figure of speech is not
the bare sense of the figure of speech itself, but something else that the figure of speech
points to or signifies. For example, when Scripture talks about God’s hands or arms,
what it means by that figure of speech is the presence of his power rather than the
immediate sense of hands and arms. As Whitaker made clear, underlying this special
interest in defining the literal sense was the desire to combat a medieval understanding of
the literal sense. Many of those Catholics, among them Bellarmine, who continued to use
the quadriga, regarded the literal sense narrowly as the sense immediately gathered by
words. Because of this understanding of the literal sense, they needed to allegorize the
words.65 Against this, the Protestant orthodox argued that the literal sense includes
rhetorical expressions such as metaphors and figures. Within this understanding of the
literal sense, the first step is to acknowledge the literary devices. Thus, said Weemse,
“bonus grammaticus, bonus theologus [a good grammarian makes a good theologian]: for
we can never come to the true meaning and sense, unlesse the words be unfolded.”66 As
he argued in his Christian Synagogue:

65 Whitaker, Disputation, V. ii (pp. 404-5); Edward Leigh, A Treatise of Religion and Learning and of
Religious and Learned Men Consisting of Six Books... London, 1656, I. iv (p. 172); Muller, PRRD, II:494-95.

66 Weemse, Exercitations, in Works [1636], vol. 3, p. 179.
Therefore to know the true meaning of the Prophets we must doe two things. First, by his words to search out the Idea of the vision, which the Prophet had revealed to him in his imagination. Secondly, when we have found out the true image of the Idea, to find out the true signification thereof. It is a very hard thing to finde out the second ... yet the second can never be understood without the first.67

Weemse clarifies the traditionally received concept of the broad literal sense by defining it as either "simple" or "compound." The approach of the "compound" literal sense used by Weemse reflects the Protestant insistence on the single literal sense and drew on the concern, voiced earlier in the tradition by Nicholas of Lyra, that a text be permitted contemporary or historical and future or prophetic points of reference. This approach of the "compound" sense was popular among the early seventeenth-century authors. According to MacCallum, Weemse's argument on the "compound" literal sense was "quite possibly known to Milton" and used by him.68 The simple literal sense is in turn divided into "proper" sense and "figurative" sense according to the manners of relationship between the intended sense and words used to express it. Therefore, according to Weemse, the literal sense is defined in three different ways depending upon the different methods of uncovering the intended sense—simple, figurative, and

---

67 Weemse, Synagogue, in Works [1636], vol. 1, pp. 23-24; Cf. the similar view expressed by Ainsworth who said that "by a true and sound literall explication, the spirituall meaning may the better be discerned" in "Preface," in Annotations upon Genesis.

compound. The single literal sense that is understood within this broader fashion is called "one full and entire sense."\(^{69}\)

The simple sense is composed of either immediate signification of a word, which is usually argued by many Catholics, or its figurative signification. What is important for Weemse is that the word has a single part of signification. Thus, that "Jehova is just" (II Chronicles 12:6) has a literal signification, that is, a properly literal sense. However, "thou wilt not leave my soule in grave; neither suffer thy holy one to see corruption" (Psalms 16:10) has a figurative signification which is attributed only to Christ, and not to David.\(^{70}\)


The compound sense is the literal sense that "whereof there are two parts, literall and figurative, to make up one sense, which is fulfilled two manner of ways, Historice and Prophetice in the type, and literally in the thing signified."\textsuperscript{71} Two things must be mentioned about this compound literal sense. First, the word "compound" does not mean here containing two different senses, but a single sense made up out of two different modes of signification. Weemse said: "but onely it shewes the diverse ways how the severall parts of a Scripture have beene fulfilled, either literally or figuratively."\textsuperscript{72}

For example, the promise made by the Lord to David in II Samuel 7:12, "I will set up thy seed after thee which shall procede out of thy bowels," has two significations, literal and figurative.

This promise looked both \textit{ad propius} [proper sense] and \textit{remotius} [remote sense], yet it made up but one sense... he applyeth this promise literally to his sonne Salomon, and figuratively to Christ his Sonne... So by the promises made to David concerning Salomon, we take up him who is greater than Salomon; and these two make but one sense... So the Lords eye was principally upon the Messias, but he did cast a looke, as it were, also to Salomon.\textsuperscript{73}

The words applied both to Solomon and Christ. And the two significations make up one rich, compound sense.

\textsuperscript{71} Weemse, \textit{Synagogue}, in \textit{Works} [1636], vol. 1, p. 230; Whitaker, \textit{Disputation}, V.ii (pp. 405-06).

\textsuperscript{72} Weemse, \textit{Synagogue}, in \textit{Works} [1636], vol. 1, p. 229.

\textsuperscript{73} Weemse, \textit{Exercitations}, in \textit{Works} [1636], vol. 3, pp. 182-83; Cf. similar exegeses from Calvin, \textit{Sermons on 2 Samuel}, pp. 318-23; Trapp, \textit{Comentary}, II Sam. 7:11-14; "Westminster" \textit{Annotations}, II Sam. 7:11-14; Diodati, \textit{Annotations}, II Sam. 7:11-14; \textit{Dutch Annotations}, II Sam. 7:11-14.
Secondly, Weemse did not here attempt to systematize or dogmatize the interpretive method but endeavored to give proper attention to the understanding of diverse expressions of the Testaments. A biblical pattern that leads to compound literal sense is the typological pattern or prophecy-fulfillment pattern. “When these testimonies [in the Old Testament] are applied in the New Testament, the literall sense is made up sometimes of the type and the thing typed.”\(^7^4\) The compound literal sense might be indicated by a phrase like “that the Scripture might be fulfilled.” An example of this pattern, John 13:18, which begins with this phrase, was first spoken by David of Ahithophel in Psalms 41:9. There Ahithophel is a type and Judas in whom the words were literally fulfilled in his act of betrayal of Christ is the anti-type.\(^7^5\) The meaning of John 13:18 is compounded in the sense that the event was applied to both persons, Achitophel and Judas and that the two events are so typically interrelated that the earlier event both anticipates and supplements the meaning of the latter event.

The compound sense is drawn, sometimes, on history and allegory as in the case of Sara and Hagar. At other times, the compound is made up of the combination of the literal and tropological. “Ye shall not muzzle the mouth of the Oxe that treadeth out the corne” (I Corinthians 9:9) is one of such cases. “A voyce was heard in Ramah” (Jeremiah 31:15) is an example of making up of the literal sense out of history, mystery, and prophecy. The historical part of the sense is made out of the mourning for the ten


\(^7^5\) Weemse, *Exercitations*, in *Works* [1636], vol. 3, p. 186.
tribes, sons of Rachel, who could not be brought back from the captivity. It is a mystical signification that Rachel mourned for the ten tribes. It is a prophetic signification that this mourning foretells the cruel murders committed by Herod which would happen not far from Rachel’s grave. All these—historical, mystical, and prophetic significations—made up but one sense.  

The sacrament of the Supper is also an example of compound sense. When Jesus said “this is my body,” he pointed to the bread and wine in his hands. “The subject is the bread and wine which he doth demonstrate; the attribute is that which is signified by the bread and wine, and these two make up but one sense, propius and remotius.” One should understand Christ’s words “on this rock I will build my church” in the same way. Similarly, “a bone of him shall not be broken” (John 19:36) is spoken both regarding the bones of the Paschal lamb, spoken literally and properly, and of Christ, spoken figuratively. Both of them make up one, full literal sense.

The sentence “I called my Sonne out of Aegypt” (Hosea 11:1) is historically true for the Jews, but in the progressive revelation of God it is prophetically applied to Christ (Matthew 2:15). Hosea’s words are fulfilled literally both to Jews and Christ. Sometimes the compound sense is made up of one literal and another typical

---

76 Weemse, Exercitations, in Works [1636], vol. 3, pp. 183-84.
significations. That “they cast lots upon my garment” (Psalms 22:18) was literally fulfilled by Christ’s suffering, but only typically by the divided kingdoms of David. 79

Sometimes, the literal sense is to be understood figuratively or allegorically. The literal sense broadens beyond its grammatical or historical sense when the grammatical or historical sense of the word is contrary to the analogy of faith, clear passages of Scripture, or any Commandment of God. According to this rule, “thou shalt heape coales of fire upon his head” (Romans 12:20) or “if thy right eye offend thee plucke it out, and cast it from thee” (Matthew 5:29) should be understood figuratively, for they are contrary to the sixth Commandment. 80 Arguing for the same view of figurative interpretation, Perkins rejects literalistic reading of Christ’s words, “this is my body.” Since the literalistic reading is contrary to the received analogy of faith summarized in the Apostles’ Creed, a new interpretation is called for. 81

In the same way the grammatical or historical sense is to be dropped when the grammatical or historical sense of the word is contrary to the “modesty, piety, or good manners” of Christian living. An example of the text in which language is found that is contrary to modesty is found, according to Weemse, is Isaiah 20:2 where Isaiah was bidden to go naked. The Spirit-intended sense of this text, says Weemse, is that he went without his prophetical garment. Passages seemingly contrary to piety are found in such

79 Weemse, Synagogue, in Works [1636], vol. 1, p. 230.
80 Weemse, Exercitations, in Works [1636], vol. 3, p. 179.
sentences as “to cut off the right hand, and pull out the right eye” (Matthew 5:29, 30).

Literary expression that is contrary to good manners is found in Ezekiel 4:12 where Ezekiel was commanded to bake bread with human excrement. Also contrary to good manners is the command that Hosea received to marry a whore (Hosea 1:2). Weemse says that the words to Ezekiel and Hosea were only given “in vision,” thus were not supposed to be fulfilled literally.⁸²

Weemse took the concept of modesty in the holy language from the masoretic tradition.

The Masorets have changed one word into another for modesty... and their tradition in the Talmud is... words which are written in the Scripture, in termes which have any show of dishonesty they read them in comely termes.⁸³

Weemse generalized this masoretic rule and applied it in his exegesis to the effect that sometimes he put significant pressure on his own exegetical pattern of understanding the simple grammatical-historical meaning. Henry Lukin held to an opinion similar to Weemse. The words of Scripture, according to him, that seemed to be “repugnant to nature, or morality” should be understood either as actions that were never done or actions in vision. Isaiah 20:2, Ezekiel 4:12, and Hosea 1:2 are included in that category

---

⁸² Weemse, *Synagogue*, in *Works* [1636], vol. 1, p. 232; The Hebrew tradition of using modest language instead of seemingly immodest languages in Scripture is discussed in the section of Hebrew literary convention in this dissertation.

⁸³ Weemse, *Moral Law II*, in *Works* [1636], vol. 2, pp. 152-53; Jacob ben Chajim wrote about the Talmudic tradition: “Our sages submit, All the verses wherein are written indecent expressions, decent expressions are read in their stead” in his *Introduction to the Rabbinic Bible*, p. 51.
of the words that are repugnant to nature or morality. Also included in the category are Ezekiel 24:16 where Ezekiel was commanded not to mourn for his wife when she died.⁸⁴

Let us compare Weemse’s exegesis of the three passages—Isaiah 20:2, Ezekiel 4:12, and Hosea 1:2—with commentaries by other Reformed exegetes. In Isaiah 20:2, Isaiah was commanded to take off his clothes and walk naked without shoes. No one understands this in a wooden literal sense, but most exegetes understand it in a grammatical, historical sense with some concern for modesty in mind. They all agree that Isaiah walked naked.⁸⁵ His walking naked was commanded by God to teach Israel about the impending judgment, and this judgment was given to them, in Calvin’s words, “not only in words, but likewise by a visible symbol.”⁸⁶ The exegetes do not agree on what kind of garment Isaiah took off, some say it was the prophetic garment, as Weemse, Diodati, and the “Westminster” Annotations argued;⁸⁷ but the Dutch Annotations is of the opinion that it was a mourning garment that the Prophet wore in the time of calamity.⁸⁸

---

⁸⁴ Lukin, _An Introduction_, pp. 116-17.

⁸⁵ Calvin, _Commentary_. Isa. 20:2; Mayer, _A Commentary upon all the Prophets_, Isa. 20:2; Poole, _A Commentary on the Holy Bible_, Isa. 20:2; John Trapp, _A Commentary on the Old and New Testaments_, 5 vols., London, 1660, Isa. 20:2; _The Dutch Annotations upon the whole Bible_, London, 1657, Isa. 20:2; Jean Diodati, _Pious and Learned Annotations upon the Holy Bible_, London, 1651, Isa. 20:2; Thomas Gataker, et al., _Annotations upon All the Books of the Old and New Testament_, London, 1645, Isa. 20:2.

⁸⁶ Calvin, _Commentary_. Isa. 20:2.

⁸⁷ Weemse, _Synagogue_, in _Works [1636]_, vol. 1, p. 232; Diodati, _Annotations_, Isa. 20:2; _Westminster Annotations_, Isa. 20:2.

⁸⁸ _Dutch Annotations_, Isa. 20:2.
But, they all agree that Isaiah did not walk stark naked, but only without the upper garment, whether it was a prophetic garment or mourning garment. Some exegetes show concern for modesty in understanding this passage. Mayer and Trapp agree with Weemse and Lukin in that walking wholly naked is “indecent and scandalous, and withal very dangerous,” and this is why Isaiah was commanded to walk without his upper garment.\textsuperscript{89} Calvin and Poole also have concern for modesty and good manners in their exegeses, because, though they affirm that Isaiah actually walked naked, they immediately qualify their comments by adding that Isaiah went naked only whenever he needed to discharge his prophetic office.\textsuperscript{90} Trapp mitigates the hardship of walking naked by symbolically interpreting the “three years” as “three days.”\textsuperscript{91}

Unlike the previous passage, exegetes do not wholly agree on Ezekiel 4:12 on the question as to whether this command was a vision or an actual event. In the text the Lord commanded the prophet Ezekiel: “eat the food as you would a barley cake; bake it in the sight of the people, using human excrement for fuel.” Calvin understands the text in a grammatical, theological sense. He clearly says it was commanded to Ezekiel only in a vision, as Weemse and Lukin do,\textsuperscript{92} while the Dutch Annotations, Mayer, and Poole are

\textsuperscript{89} Mayer, Commentary, Isa. 20:2; Trapp, Commentary, Isa. 20:2; Weemse, Synagogue, in Works [1636], vol. 1, p. 232; Lukin, Introduction, p. 116-17.

\textsuperscript{90} Calvin, Commentary, Isa. 20:2; Poole, Commentary, Isa. 20:2.

\textsuperscript{91} Trapp, Commentary, Isa. 20:2.

\textsuperscript{92} Calvin, Commentary, Eze. 4:12; Weemse, Synagogue, in Works [1636], vol. 1, p. 232; Lukin, Introduction, pp. 116-17.
inconclusive as to whether the action was really happened. Poole is, however, more inclined toward the opinion of Calvin, while Mayer toward the opinion of actual happening because he understands the passage more literally as prescribing “his diet for the 390 days.”93 The most literalistic exegesis belongs to Trapp who says: it was caused “for want of wood... To the hungry soul every bitter thing is sweet... This, then, was more than a vision.”94 Though their opinions vary on the question whether it really happened, they share the common ground that their major interest in expounding these passages is the prophetic context within the given historical background, namely that by their disobedience the Israelites became mixed up with the pollution of the Gentiles and unable to observe the ceremonial purity.95 For Calvin, Mayer, and Poole, the command of God may be either a vision or a real event as far as the theological point is made,96 but for the literary approach of Weemse and Lukin, it must be a vision, for their understanding of the Hebrew literary convention prevents it.97

The third case, Hosea 1:2, attracted much exegetical attention. Mayer gathered the opinions of the great exegetes of the past. Jerome, Irenaeus, Basil, Augustine, Cyril, and Theodoret affirmed that Hosea, obeying the Lord’s command, actually married a

53 Dutch Annotations, Eze. 4:12; Mayer, Commentary, Eze. 4:12; Poole, Commentary, Eze. 4:12.

94 Trapp, Commentary, Eze. 4:12.

55 Calvin, Commentary, Eze. 4:12; Mayer, Commentary, Eze. 4:12; Poole, Commentary, Eze. 4:12; Trapp, Commentary, Eze. 4:12; Dutch Annotations, Eze. 4:12.

56 Calvin, Commentary, Eze. 4:12; Mayer, Commentary, Eze. 4:12; Poole, Commentary, Eze. 4:12.

common prostitute, the reason being that “nothing is dishonest which God commands
to be done.” Others such as Calvin, Diodati, Mayer, Poole, and the Dutch and
“Westminster” Annotations argue that God’s command was given to Hosea through a
prophetical vision for exactly the same reason that Weemse and Lukin have—it is against
good manners that a prophet marries a prostitute. Trapp says that this command was
given to Israel in a vision so that “they might perceive, in the looking-glass of this
allegory.”

A result of examining these test passages shows diversity within Reformed
orthodox exegetical patterns. This diversity indicates both the difficulty in defining the
single literal sense of Scripture in an exact sense and the legitimate diversity among the
Reformed orthodox exegetes in spite of their shared ground in biblical interpretation.
The diversity of exegetical patterns reflected in the orthodox period is also reflected in
the degree of using Jewish sources for Christian exegesis. Weemse’s and Lukin’s interest
in Hebrew literary convention led them minimize in their exegeses what the passages
communicate within the historical and prophetic context. Concerning the matter of
biblical texts that contain what Weemse thought was immodest or contrary to the
Commandments, he was more immersed by Jewish tradition than he thought himself.

58 Mayer, Commentary, Hos. 1:2.

59 Mayer, Commentary, Hos. 1:2; Calvin, Commentary, Hos. 1:2; Poole, Commentary, Hos. 1:2.

100 Trapp, Commentary, Hos. 1:2.
The other case when grammatical or historical sense should diminish in importance is the place where allegory is used. Allegory, being a rhetorical tool, brings to the sense “which the words meane not at the first: but that which the Author intends either in words or matter.” Allegory is, thus, according to Weemse, a manner of reaching to the single literal sense. But, he restricted the biblical allegory to the place where it was prescribed by the Spirit, especially in cases when types and sacraments of the Old Testament are interpreted in light of the New. The allegorical meaning is composed of both the literal and mystical.

In an Allegory wee consider both the literall sense and the mysticall… God hath so tempered the Scriptures, that hee hath not onely expressed his will in words, but also in matter, in types, and figures.\textsuperscript{101}

In other words, the literal sense that draws on an allegorical scheme is made “compound”—this time with the combination of the literal and mystical.

A famous example of allegory in Scripture is found in Galatians 4. Weemse also finds an allegory in the text of Deuteronomy 25:4 “thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the Oxe which treadeth out the Corne.” He compares this text with I Corinthians 9:9 and draws a spiritual sense that “thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the Minister who labours in the Gospel.” Similarly, the story of Jonathan’s arrow (I Samuel 20) brings forth both literal and mystical senses within an allegorical scheme. In Jonathan’s words “bring these two arrowes,” Weemse finds senses \textit{propius} and \textit{remotius}. \textit{Sensus propius} is the literal sense (“taking up of the arrowes”) and \textit{sensus remotius} is the mystical sense

(“flight or abiding of David”) that is further signified by the arrows. In this case, the
sensus propius is the “baser sense,” while sensus remotius is the “noble sense.”

Though the compound literal sense is composed of two manners of
signification—the literal and mystical, says Weemse, the value of each is different. He
claims that “the spirituall sense is more noble.” In this claim, the Reformed orthodox
tries to balance between two extremes: to avoid excessive allegorical exegesis, against
the Catholic practice; but at the same time to retain a spiritual sense, just like them. The
spiritual sense is nobler than the grammatical because the spiritual sense of the New
Testament is the anti-type foreshadowed by the type of the Old Testament. Thus, the
nobility of the spiritual sense as the goal of interpretation should be properly
distinguished from the primacy of the literal sense as the foundation of interpretation.
Weemse understand the spiritual sense, like other Protestant orthodox exegetes, as the
sense that is drawn from the New Testament fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies
or typological interpretation of the Old Testament figures in the New, placed in the
broader context of analogy of faith.

A good example of Weemse’s interpretation in which the literal sense yields to a
nobler spiritual sense is his comment on the institution of the Lord’s Supper, a text upon

---

102 Whitaker even explained Gal. 4:24 to be “typical” exegesis of Paul rather than “allegorical.” See
Disputation, V.ii (p. 405); Weemse, Synagogue, in Works [1636], vol. 1, pp. 233-34.

103 Weemse, Synagogue, in Works [1636], vol. 1, pp. 233-34.

104 Weemse, Synagogue, in Works [1636], vol. 1, pp. 232-33; Muller, PRRD. II:499; McKane, Selected
Christian Hebraists, p. 103.
which heated debates had been wrought between the Protestants and Catholics. This
is the case where the literal sense is drawn from the figurative understanding of the words
in such a way that the figurative understanding leads to a spiritual sense of the words.

When Moses said in Exodus 24:8 “Behold the blood of the covenant,” says Weemse, the
word “blood” here is to be understood properly, meaning real blood. However, when
Jesus said to his disciples “This is my body... this is my blood,” the words “body” and
“blood” are not to be understood properly, but figuratively, because “he pointeth at the
thing present, and understandeth the thing that is not present.” After this Weemse
explains four different ways of understanding the presence of body and blood. It should
be noted that here Weemse employed the scholastic method of distinction to clarity the
proper Protestant doctrine of the Supper.

First, σωματικὸς when a man is bodily present. Secondly, σημαντικὸς,
as when a man is present by his picture. Thirdly, ἐνεργητικὸς, as the
sunne is present by operation in heating and nourishing things below here.
Fourthly, ἀντιληπτικὸς, when we apprehend a thing in our mind. Christ
when he sayd, this is my body, and this is my blood, he was present there
σωματικὸς, but he was not in the bread and the wine σωματικὸς, for then
his blood should have beene there before it was shed; then hee should
have had two bodies, one visible and another invisible: but he was present
there in the bread and the wine σημαντικὸς, because the bread and the
wine represented his body, and his blood: So hee was present there
ἐνεργητικὸς, by his Spirit working in their hearts and he was present to
them by faith ἀντιληπτικὸς, when they did spiritually eate his body and
drinke his blood, and this is the true and literall sense of the words.\footnote{Weemse, *Exercitations*, in *Works* [1636], vol. 3, p. 181.}

According to this understanding, the intended literal meaning of Jesus’ words “this is my
body,” then, is a remembrance, in a spiritual sense, of his own death. The figurative
interpretation of the “body” and “blood” leads the reader beyond their immediate sense to a loftier realm of the spirit. In this exegetical pattern, the literal text becomes one and the same with spiritual reality. In Weemse’s words, “the externall action bringeth to minde the internall action.”

Though mystical or spiritual sense is the goal of exegetical effort, Weemse emphasizes that it must be firmly established upon the right understanding of the word. For without the ground of the word, the mystical sense is blind: “We are not to make an allegoricall application of any thing in the old Testament to the Church in the new, but where the holy Ghost hath made it.” Weemse was well aware of the traditional dictum, *symbolica seu mystica theologia non est argumentativa* (symbolic or mystical sense cannot serve as ground for theological argument). What this dictum prohibits for him is not categorical rejection of allegory, because Scripture uses allegory, but the human extrapolation of allegorical sense. For the allegorical sense that is approved by the Spirit in Scripture is the literal sense, in terms of its compound manner. Thus, when the mystical sense is approved by the Spirit in Scripture, then being normative in value, it can serve as ground for theological argument. In this case, the allegorical signification is the literal sense itself, not a spiritual application.

---


The orthodox theologians divided allegory into two categories, a distinction through which they further refined the broad literal sense and thus set a clearer boundary of the literal sense on which alone doctrines should be established. According to Turretin who followed Weemse’s definition of the literal sense as simple and compound sense and his understanding of application, allegory is either “innate” or “invented”:

Allergy is either innate (or inferred, or intended by the Holy Spirit) or invented by men. In the latter sense, it does not enter into the sense of the Scriptures, but is a consequence drawn from the study of man by manner of application. But the former is contained in the compound sense as a part of it because it cannot be doubted that it was intended by the Spirit and thus from his mind.109

b. Spiritual Application of the Single Literal Sense

In the previous section we have shown that the literal sense can be drawn either from a simple signification of the words or from a figurative signification of the words. The latter case produces the literal-spiritual sense usually within the progressive revelation of the Old Testament types and their fulfillment in the New or within the prophecies and their realization in the New. The literal-spiritual sense of Scripture should be distinguished from its application for spiritual edification in the church. For under this distinction lies the long-debated issue of the relationship between diverse senses of Scripture and diverse applications of the single literal sense.

109 Turretin, Institutes, II.xix.7.
Biblical interpretation thus moves from the literal sense of Scripture toward the teaching and preaching of the church. Weemse says that just as the carpenter line is properly called the line of carpenter’s practice, “so the Word of God is the line of practice.” Appealing to Aquinas who said that “fides non est recta ratio agendi, sed recta ratio sentiendi” (faith is not to be done in the correct way, but is to be felt), Weemse concluded concerning theological study that “divinity consisteth in practice.”

The interpretation of Scripture has two parts: explication of the right sense and its application. Lukin’s words on this subject make a clear point:

When we have thus set our selves to read the Scriptures; there are two things which we should have a special regard to; First, the finding out the true sense; and proper meaning of what we read, and then inferring something from it, which may be of some use to us, for informing our judgments, quickening our affections, directing our practice... For it is first necessary that we understand what we read, and then we may from one Truth infer many Practical Conclusions.

The preacher must make application suitable to the spiritual status of each of his congregation. The subject of application is seriously studied with many examples from Scripture and Jewish customs, within a structure that eventually leads to the Christian concept of the church—the body of Christ. Weemse divides application into two parts: rebuking sinners and consoling believers. An important part of rebuke consists of

---

10 Weemse, Exercitations, in Works [1636], vol. 3, pp. 24, 177, 185; Perkins says concerning this that “Theologie, is the science of living blessedly for ever” in A Golden Chain, in Works [1608], vol. 1, p. 11; For modern assessment of the orthodox practical reading of Scripture see Robinson, “The Doctrine of Holy Scripture,” pp. 157-58; Muller, PRRD, II:492.

correcting the sinner. There are two kinds of sinners: reprovable and irreprovable sinners. The reprovable sinners are either the simple sinner, or the relapsed sinner, or crafty sinner. The malicious sinners are not reprovable. The simple sinner is to be pitied and reproof against him should accordingly not sharp, but rebuking crafty and ungodly sinners require more spiritual wisdom. Rebuke is to be done, says Weemse, in a proper order, for example, as in Christ’s rule that moves from private admonition to public admonition or as in Achan’s case in which lot is used to find out the tribe, clan, and family.\(^{112}\)

In the seventeenth-century Reformed church, many figures and ceremonies in the Old Testament, even though they are ceremonially and morally abolished, often embody churchly instructions. According to Weemse, spiritual application is of three kinds. His very terms reflect the *quadriga*, now compressed into the application of the literal sense:

The mysticall sense of the Scriptures, is Allegoricall, Tropologicall, or Anagogicall. These are not properly divers senses, but divers applications of one sense to our instruction, faith, and manners. The Allegorical application is, when the thing in the old Testament, shadowe out some things in the estate of the new Testament... The Tropologicall, is, when the thing delivered, signifieth some other thing to expresse manners... The Anagogicall application, is, when things literally expressed, doe signifie something in heavens blisse.\(^{113}\)

\(^{112}\) Weemse, *Synagoge*, in *Works* [1636], vol. 1, pp. 288-306; Cf. Perkins suggests seven different categories of people: the unbelievers “who are both ignorant and unteachable,” “some teachable but yet ignorant,” some who “have knowledge, but are not as yet humbled,” some humble, some who believe, some who are fallen, and some who are mixed with more than one characteristic in *The Arte of Prophecying*, in *Works* [1609], vol. 2, pp. 752-56; For Perkins' work on application see R. T. Kendall, “Preaching in Early Puritanism with special reference to William Perkins’s *The Arte of Prophecying,*” in *Preaching and Revival* (London, Westminster Conference, 1984), pp. 25-33.

\(^{113}\) Weemse, *Synagoge*, in *Works* [1636], vol. 1, p. 234.
An example of spiritual application is found in Genesis 3:15, “the seede shall tread downe the head of the Serpent.” Its literal sense, according to Weemse, is that Christ shall tread down the snake’s head. Its anagogical application is, in the words of Chrysostom and Ambrose, that “the Church shall tread downe the head of the Serpent.” Its allegorical application following Augustine and Nicholas of Lyra is “reason shall tread downe Appetite.” But “the Virgin Mary shall tread downe the head of the Serpent” is “blasphemous” sense, which Bernard and sundry Catholics followed.\textsuperscript{114} Similarly, Weemse made spiritual applications out of God’s commandment to Moses to prepare two stone tablets in Exodus 34:1. First, God wrote his laws upon stone, “to signifie the hardnesse of our hearts,” second, “to signifie the perpetuity” of his law, and third, “to teach us, that he must prepare our hearts and smooth them.”\textsuperscript{115}

Spiritual application of the literal sense in the church context, though legitimate, is limited to a proper use in order to avoid the danger that was caused by excessive mystical reading of some patristic and medieval traditions. Regarding the proper use of spiritual application Perkins said:

\begin{quote}
It shall be lawful also to gather Allegories: for they are arguments taken from things that are like, and \textit{Paul} in his teaching useth them often. I. Cor. 9. 9. But they are to be used with these cautions: 1. Let them be used sparingly and soberly. 2. Let them not be far fetcht, but fitting to the matter in hand. 3. They must be quickly dispatcht. 4. They are to be used for instruction of the life, and not to proove any point of faith.\textsuperscript{116}
\end{quote}


Weemse’s caution regarding the proper application of the literal sense of Scripture is well indicated by his distinction between *destinata applicatio* (intended application) and *accommodatio* (accommodation). The former is an application as cited by the New Testament authors: using words of the Old Testament in the New and applying them for their own purpose. The latter is application as done by modern preachers who apply words out of Scripture and use them for spiritual edification within their congregational context. For example, when Paul applied an Old Testament prophecy to the Jews of his time in the New Testament, it was an internal application from the Old Testament and thus became the literal sense of the New. But when a preacher applied the same Old Testament prophecy for his congregation, it is only an inferred application of the prophecy and can by no means be a literal sense of the text.\(^{117}\)

This threefold spiritual application corresponds exactly to the diverse spiritual senses of Scripture in the medieval *quadriga*. What is significant in the Protestant formulation in relation to the medieval exegesis is that the Protestant orthodox, along with the early Reformers, retained a spiritual signification in the form of application, while the Catholics maintained it in the form of sense. All, whether they were medieval Catholics, early Reformers, or seventeenth century Protestant orthodox, retained the spiritual signification of Scripture and reckoned it as nobler than bare historical or grammatical sense. This basic tendency of biblical interpretation explains well the pre-modern understanding of Scripture in orthodox theology and documents the general

\(^{117}\) Weemse, *Exercitations*, in *Works* [1636], vol. 3, pp. 185-86.
continuity from medieval theology through the Reformation to Protestant orthodox theology.

The Reformed orthodox practice shows both a sincere study of this application and a broad use of its application. Perkins illustrates application as “that, wherby the doctrine rightly collected is diversly fitted according as place, time, and person doe require.” He divides the application to make it fit for seven different types of people—from those “unbelievers who are both ignorant & unteachable” to the Christians who are already in the church. The application is of two kinds—either mental or practical. The mental application is again either for bringing doctrine to the mind or reforming the mind from error. The practical application is either instruction or correction for practical life.\textsuperscript{118}

Application is not limited to the spiritual realm. Weemse’s connection of natural science and Jewish ceremonies of the Old Testament to spiritual edification of the church shows his pre-modern perspective on reading Scripture. In applying the sense of Scripture for the church the historical difference between the Jewish ceremonies and the church and even scientific knowledge of nature and astronomy do not create a problem for him. For example, his concern for practical use of Scripture leads him to find spiritual use for the dial of the clock. At the end of his description of the Jewish method of reckoning time, he says:

\textsuperscript{118} Perkins, \textit{Art of Prophecying}, in \textit{Works} [1609], vol. 2, pp. 752-58.
Now to make some application and spirituall use of these Dials. Christ before his Incarnation was like to the Sunne shining upon the Equinoctiall Diall, where the shadow is very low; secondly, before Christ came in the flesh, there were many Ceremonies, and a long shadow, but since Christ came in the flesh, this is like the Sunne shining upon the Polar Diall, the shadow is short, and the Sunne is neerer. Thirdly, our estate in this life compared with the life to come, is like to the meridionall Diall; for the meridionall Diall sheweth not the twelfth hour; so in this life, we see not the sonne of righteousnesse in his brightnesse.\(^{119}\)

His Ptolemaic worldview prevents him from believing Copernicus’ astronomical discovery. Understanding literally Ecclesiastes 1:4-5, which translates “The earth standeth for ever, but the Sunne riseth, and goeth downe, and hasteth to the place whence it arose,” he believes that the sun moves around the earth. “The nature of the Center, is to be Immoveable,” Weemse comments—and if the opposite were true, then improbably, the heavens were turned about that which is movable.\(^{120}\) Weemse relates this astronomical knowledge to the spiritual status of the church.

The conclusion of this is; if the earth that hangeth upon nothing, be so settled that it cannot bee moved, how much more is the Church settled, which is settled upon the rokke Christ? In the setting of the earth, Gods power and his wisedome are seene: but in setting of his Church, both his power and his mercy appear.\(^{121}\)

Similarly, Weemse draws a spiritual teaching for the church from the Jewish feast of the New Moon. The Jews, says Weemse, were “commanded to keepe the New Moone, and

\(^{119}\) Weemse, Judicial Laws, in Works [1636], vol. 3, pp. 94-95.

\(^{120}\) Weemse, Observations, in Works [1636], vol. 1, p. 12.

\(^{121}\) Weemse, Observations, in Works [1636], vol. 1, pp. 12-13; Similarly in pp. 38-39 Weemse elicits spiritual application from dew saying that “here (Isa. 45:8) the Prophet taketh a comparison from the falling downe of the dew upon the earth, to shew the conception of Christ in the wombe of the Virgin.” In p. 53 Weemse draws from the biblical teaching that while a child comes from father’s thigh, the woman came from the husband’s side the spiritual teaching that “the husband should love his wife better than his children.”
not the full Moone, to teach the Church that her greatest perfection here is to bee
growing to perfection.”

**c. The Limits of Allegory and Typology in Weemse’s Exegesis**

Recent studies of Dickson and Madsen suggest that the broader view of typology
of the seventeenth century explains its diversity of typological patterns. Dickson argues
that typological interpretation of the period became complicated by various kinds of
typology: the “sacramental” and “eschatological” typologies as well as the traditional
Christological typology. The eschatological typology describes “the ultimate perfection
of the events prefigured by both Christological and sacramental types that would occur in
the fullness of time,” the result of which is similar to the anagogical sense of the
medieval tradition of *quadriga*. Sacramental typology emphasizes that “the individual
Christian could become Christ-like and hence could recapitulate Christological types.”
These latter two typological patterns were applications of the single literal sense of
Scripture. The emphasis on practical application was shared by biblical theologians of
the century. Citing Weemse as representative of the seventeenth century emphasis,
Dickson says that the orthodox theologians “spoke at great length of the ‘application’ of

---

the one typic sense of Scripture ‘to our instruction, faith, and manners.’\textsuperscript{123} Weemse, for example, comments on “I am the Lord thy God”:

The Schoolmen say well, that all the comfort in divinity lyeth in these possessive pronouns mine, thine, and our’s… Mine and thine are words of love… So when the Lord uttereth this word to us, I am your God, we should hastily catch it, and lay hold upon it, and make particular application to ourselves of the promise.\textsuperscript{124}

Thus, it is dangerous to draw the conclusion that this diversity of exegetical practice was a theological deviation from the earlier Reformation theology, for the diversity usually consists of how and to what extent the typological, theological understanding of the Old Testament types in the New is related to Christian life, not that the content of the typological, theological sense is altered or denied. It usually is a matter of emphasis—an emphasis not only on how one connects both Testaments but also on how one applies what one reads to the churchly setting, as when comparing Weemse with Calvin. The diversity of typological patterns should rather be understood as an effort within Reformation theology to maintain the rich spiritual meaning of Scripture that has been cherished in the long history of the church. Dickson says the following:

The complexities of the three kinds of types recognized implicitly by Protestant commentators ought to be a reminder of the continuity between medieval and Renaissance, even between Roman and reformed, spiritual practices. While the terms Christological, sacramental, and eschatological do not exactly correspond to the terminology of fourfold allegory and


while the reformers' methodology was more firmly grounded in the literal text itself, the similarities reveal the common difficulties of recovering the riches of an intricate, demanding text.\textsuperscript{125}

Weemse's theory of allegory includes a serious caveat against extrapolation of foreign sense into Scripture. "Beware to fall from the literal sense to the Allegoricall, and the Anagogicall sense, least thou fall at last to the blasphemous sense."\textsuperscript{126} Weemse makes it very clear that not only the literal sense but also its spiritual application should be grounded on the proper study of biblical philology. For him, the right interpretation is found in philological study of the text, for the intention of the author is found in the text.

Every Scripture cannot have their divers applications: \textit{Non ex legentis voluntate, sed ex scribentis authoritate intelligenda est Scriptura,} The Scripture is not to be understood, according to the will of the Reader; but according to the authority of the Writer, and they should not be sought out, but when the Spirit of God hath applyed them.\textsuperscript{127}

Thus, allegory should not be sought, except at the places of Scripture where the Spirit approved its use. This teaching of Weemse finds an echo in the words of Whitaker.

Whitaker restricts types and allegories to the prescribed uses within Scripture. He says on Hosea 11:1 (out of Egypt have I called my son) and Exodus 12:46 (thou shalt not break a bone of him):

\begin{quote}
Who, now, would dare to transfer and accommodate these to Christ, if the Holy Spirit had not done it first, and declared to us his mind and intention?--namely, that the \textit{Son} in the former passage denotes not only the
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{125} Dickson, "The Complexities of Biblical Typology," pp. 266-67.


people of Israel, but Christ also; and the bone, in the latter, is to be understood of Christ as well as the paschal lamb.\textsuperscript{128}

While allegorical exegesis is discouraged, typological exegesis played an essential role in preserving the Old and the New Testaments as norms for the church.\textsuperscript{129} Weemse’s theory of typological exegesis, like his theory of allegory, is in one place restricted to the clearly known types and anti-types of Scripture. He distinguishes the proper types of Scripture from mere examples in it. The former is restricted to the known type-and-anti-type relationship in Scripture, such as the “bone” of the Paschal lamb that should not be broken in the Jewish ceremony. This proper type is “a representation of any thing to come” in the New Testament. The example is not prescribed in Scripture, but still useful for imitation for Christian faith and practice. It is, for example, “goodness or splendor in the men which maketh them to bee followed, as the mildnesse of Moses, the patience of Job; These were not types properly but examples.”\textsuperscript{130}

Weemse could, however, at times argue for a broader pattern of typological exegesis. This occurs particularly where his adaptation of typological exegesis is closely

\textsuperscript{128} Whitaker, \textit{Disputation}, p. 409; Cf. a similar opinion, Perkins, \textit{The Epistles to the Galatians}, in \textit{Works [1609]}, vol. 2, Gal. 4:21-13; Lukin, \textit{Introduction}, p. 114; Cf. a broader understanding of allegory of Smith, \textit{The Mysterie}, pp. 54-57. Smith distinguishes between natural allegory and inferred allegory. The former is “explicitly delivered in the Scriptures themselves” that is what Weemse and Whitaker call the only category of allegory, and the latter is “such as the Scripture itself shewes not, nor makes manifest, but is brought in by interpreters.” Smith’s exegetical practice shows that the “ground” on which he based allegory is extremely broad. In other words, his allegorical exegesis extended to the cases where there is no explicit guarantee of Scripture. The Noah’s ark (Gen. 6:14) is “allegorically represents” the spiritual house of God (I. Pet. 2:5). The olive leaf of Gen. 8:11 that the dove brought to Noah “represents” the gospel (Luke 10:34).

\textsuperscript{129} Reventlow, \textit{The Authority of the Bible}, p. 146.

connected with a use of the marginal notes of the masoretic text for the clarification of the text,—the marginal notes clarify and illustrate the sense of text. Specifically, Weemse argues, when the Spirit prescribed the marginal notes of the Old Testament to be used in the New, the marginal notes became the proper sense of the New Testament text. In other words, the marginal glosses are sometimes reflected in the New Testament use of an Old Testament text. But if a marginal note of the Old is not cited by the Spirit to be the sense in the New, but is not contradictory to the analogy of faith, it can be still used for “illustration” of the sense.\textsuperscript{131} Weemse suggests a similar rule for using typology in Scripture. If historical events, figures, or sacraments of the Old Testament are explicitly used as types in the New, those types and the anti-types make up a compound sense. But if they do not find explicit anti-types in the New Testament, and if they are not contradictory to analogy of faith, they can be used to illustrate the sense of the text as spiritual edification in preaching.\textsuperscript{132}

In the exposition of the Law, Weemse applies the teaching of the fourth Commandment to Christian edification.

Lastly, their Sabbath was a pledge to them of all the benefits which they were to receive in Christ to come; in the allegorical signification, their Sabbath signified to them Christ resting in the grave; in the tropological signification, it signified to them their rest from their servile works, and workes of the flesh: and in the anagogical signification, it signified to them their eternal rest.\textsuperscript{133}

\textsuperscript{131} Weemse, \textit{Exercitations}, in \textit{Works} [1636], vol. 3, pp. 184-86.


In Weemse’s Christological interpretation, the Sabbath was a pledge, or type to the Jews of the benefits that would come through Christ. The meaning of the Sabbath was determined by its direct relation to Christ. Nonetheless, although the historical and cultural milieu of the Old Testament Jews was considered, Weemse’s application is for the Jews, not for the Christians.

If the Sabbath were the type for the Jews of the future blessing in Christ, can it be a type in extension for the Christians of the eternal rest that they will enjoy in the coming Kingdom? He answers by way of dividing uses of types into two categories: definite type and arbitrary type.

But is not our Sabbath a type to us of our eternall rest? It is an arbitrary type, but not a destinate type, for all types are ceased now to us; wee may say, as wee rest this day from our labours; so we shall rest one day in the heavens from our sinnes, but this is onely an arbitrary type.\(^{134}\)

In other words, the Spirit did not prescribe a typological significance of the Sabbath for Christians within the redemptive history of Scripture. However, Weemse’s theory of typological exegesis leaves room for extracting from the rest of the Sabbath the joy of the eternal rest that believers will enjoy in the coming Kingdom. This kind of type is an arbitrary type—that is, it is not prescribed in Scripture for that purpose—but it can be applied to Christians in an extended sense.

Thus, though the fourth Commandment cannot be used to prove dogmatically the eternal rest that believers will enjoy in the future, it can still be used as an anagogical

application for the future bliss, within the limit of the sums of the biblical teaching
made in the analogy of faith. Thus, although Weemse expounds the sense of the Sabbath
as sign for the Jews, he applies its spiritual edification for the Christian reader. Calvin
had basically the same structure of typological exegesis of the fourth Commandment:
according to him, the Sabbath is a “sign whereby Israel may recognize that God is their
sanctifier,” but it is also “fore shadowing of spiritual rest.”

Another example of Weemse’s typological exegesis is from his exposition of the
golden candlestick. He says that one must not be mystical and seek the meaning of each
detailed part of the candlestick, but should be satisfied with the simple relation: “the
Candlesticke signified the Word.” He does not say that the candlestick is a type of the
Word of God, but only that it “signifies” the Word. Weemse does not provide the
biblical ground for the candlestick being “signification” of the Word of God. Thus, it is a
sign of the Word of God. He also denies the candlesticks being types of the seven church
of Asia. According to this interpretation, John’s words in Revelation 1:13 “And in the
midst of the seven Candlesticks one like the Sonne of man cloathed with a garment” is
only “typus arbitrarius, or an allusion” to the candlestick of the Old Testament—an
accommodation of the Old Testament candlestick for his own purpose in the New.
Though Weemse restricts the candlestick to the signification of the Word of God, his
spiritual application of that signification goes beyond that limit. For example, the priest’s
act of trimming the lamps signifies “how Christ and his Ministers should continually

135 Calvin, Institutes, II.viii.29; idem., Comm. on Ex. 20:8.
looke unto the purity of doctrine and preaching of the light of the Gospel.” The manner of maintaining the candlestick in such a way that each one of the six lamps must be lit one by one from the center lamp signifies “that one Scripture giveth light to another.”

Weemse’s exegetical practice shows that though he restricts allegory to the places where they are prescribed within Scripture, his typological interpretation is not restricted to those cases that are explicitly prescribed in both Testaments. His freer handling of types often times moves beyond the boundary of the prophetic relationship between the Old and New Testaments. When he moves beyond the limit of the prophetic sense, he usually provides spiritual application that is indicated by the signs “A signifies B” or “A represents B” or “A alludes to B.” For example, Weemse says that the high priest was a type of Christ in five ways—in person, in his anointing, in his apparel, in his marriage, and in his death. Among these five ways, Weemse’s description of the apparel is significant for the issue of the “ground” on which he builds typological application. “He [the high priest] was a type of Christ: his Crowne signified his kingly office; his Urim and Thummin, signified his Priestly office; and his Bells, his prophetcall office.”

Weemse attempts to prove that Christ is the anti-type of the high priest by appealing to Jonathan’s Aramaic paraphrase. According to the paraphrase, the high priest’s apparel in Ezekiel 44:18 “he shall not be girded about the sweating places” is a type of Christ’s apparel in Revelation 1:13 which reads that Christ is said to be “girded about his paps.”

This apparel signifies "the great sincerity and verity which was in his heart: for he was girded with a girdle of verity about his heart." That the high priest did not wear any ornament when he entered the holiest of all signifies I. Corinthians 15 "Christ shall give up his kingdom to the Father." The hem of Christ's garment that touched the ground signifies his humanity.  

It may be asked whether Weemse's exegetical practice consistently follows his rule that "every Scripture cannot have their diverse applications... The Scripture is not to be understood, according to the will of the Reader; but according to the authority of the Writer." Weemse adheres to his rule as far as his definition of the literal sense is concerned. He is also persistent, especially against the Catholic practice of quadriga, in underscoring the long-cherished theological principle that mystical sense cannot prove any doctrine. This is exactly why his definition of the literal sense stresses a greater caution against the excessive use of allegorical exegesis. His exegetical practice indicates, however, a freer handling of types in matters of application of typology.

Thus, as far as his spiritual application of types and anti-types is concerned, the net result is not very different from the result of diverse spiritual senses that he so

---

137 Weemse, Synagogue, in Works [1636], vol. 1, pp. 118-22, 273; idem., Exercitations, in Works [1636], vol. 3, p. 46; idem., Moral Law II, in Works [1636], vol. 2, pp. 126-27; Weemse's exposition of this part of Christ's apparel is based on his pseudo-scientific, spiritual understanding of human organs. He understood that heart is the first mover of all human actions. Thus, it lives first and dies the last. This spiritual understanding led him to conclude from Eccl. 10:2 that "the Anatomists marke when the heart inclineth more to the right side; the spirits of these men are more lively, and are more apt for contemplation; the right hand is the stronger hand, because more heate proceeds from the heart to the right hand." See Weemse, Portraiture, in Works [1636], vol. 1, pp. 21-22, 26; For another example of making spiritual application from the utensils of the temple see idem., Synagogue, in Works [1636], vol. 1, p. 105.
strongly abhors.\textsuperscript{138} It should be remembered, however, that this result reflects Weemse’s theological orientation of maintaining the traditional Reformation principle of the single, but broadly defined, literal sense and an underlying distinction of value and use between the literal sense and its practical application. Weemse is fully convinced that though Scripture is used for spiritual edification of the church, applied sense should be distinguished from the literal sense, especially when the latter is related to formal doctrines. This distinction is clearly indicated by the shared principles among the orthodox of formulating doctrines out of biblical exegesis of Scripture. Among the many principles Weemse is well aware of, two are pertinent to the subject in question: first, “Of the Scriptures things necessarily follow, but of profane things they follow probably”;\textsuperscript{139} and second, “\textit{theologia symbolica non est argumentativa}.”\textsuperscript{140} These two principles are frequently cited and used by Weemse in relation to, positively, formulating doctrines and, negatively, refuting Catholic doctrines. For example, Weemse takes issue with the Catholics on their doctrine of priestly celibacy. Based on Moses’ command to abstain from sexual relationship in Exodus 19:14-14 and David’s episode about eating the consecrated bread in I Samuel 21:4-5, says Weemse, the Catholics formulated the doctrine that “ministers, because they handle holy things, should abstaine from marriage; as the Priests were to abstaine from their wives when they were to eate this holy bread.”

\textsuperscript{138} Madsen, \textit{From Shadowy Types}, p. 38; Dickson, “The Complexities of Biblical Typology,” p. 266.


According to Weemse, this Catholic teaching is not based on the proper sense of Scripture but on symbolic sense, thus, is not a valid doctrine. He says:

Because there were foure and twenty courses of them [priests], and they served but weekly, and so long as they served they abstained from their wives, this will not inferre their conclusion: therefore those who serve under the Gospel should live altogether unmarried. This argument might be rather inverted against them this wayes, the Priests under the law were married: therefore the Priests under the Gospel may marry. And lastly, theologia symbolica non est argumentativa, those conclusions hold not which are deduced after this manner from types which are not destinate types.¹⁴¹

Another example of Weemse’s conscious distinction between literal sense and its application is found in his comment on Jesus’ statement “this is my body.” In the comment Weemse argues that the literal sense of the statement does not lead to the Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation.¹⁴² Similarly, Weemse argues that the literal sense of Matthew 12:32 does not leave room for the Catholic doctrine of purgatory.¹⁴³ Thus, although it is true that the orthodox use of application of the single sense of Scripture was similar to the diverse spiritual senses of the medieval quadriga practice, it is a terrible mistake to conclude that, as Fullerton assesses, the typological exegesis of the post-Reformation period produced diverse senses of Scripture in the same way “Roman Catholic scholasticism” did in the medieval period.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴³ Weemse, Synagogue, in Works [1636], vol. 1, pp. 241-42.
¹⁴⁴ Fullerton, Prophecy and Authority, pp. 171, 173-75, 179.
While Weemse handles types in a broad sense in application, his exegesis of Messianic Psalms and prophecies indicates more Christological rather than typological interpretation. Weemse reads the following four passages as applying only to Christ, and not to historical figures of the Old Testament:

Ps. 16:10  “Because you will not abandon me to the grave, nor will you let your Holy One see decay.”

Ps. 45:6-7  “Your throne, O God, will last for ever and ever; a scepter of justice will be the scepter of your kingdom. You love righteousness and hate wickedness; therefore God, your God, has set you above your companions by anointing you with the oil of joy.”

Ps. 110:1  “The Lord says to my Lord: ‘Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.’”

Isa. 61:1  “The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on me, because the Lord has anointed me to preach good news to the poor…”

Weemse understands such key words of the passages above as “your Holy One,” “your throne,” and “me” as a simple literal sense, that is, each of them has only one signification that applies only to Christ. In the following passage, however, as mentioned previously, Weemse finds a compound literal sense, that is, the literal sense has more than one signification.

II Sam. 7:12  “... I will raise up your offspring to succeed you, who will come from your own body, and I will establish his kingdom.”

---

145 Weemse, Synagogue, in Works [1636], vol. 1, pp. 230, 242; idem., Excercitations, in Works [1636], vol. 3, pp. 170, 184; Cf. similar exegeses, on the Psalms passages of Ainsworth, Trapp, Dickson, Westminster and Dutch Annotations; and on the Isaiah passage of Clark, Diodati, Mayer, Trapp, Poole, and Dutch Annotation.
Interestingly, Calvin reads all these five passages above in a compound literal sense, according to the classification of Weemse. In these texts Calvin’s combination of the grammatical, historical signification with typological signification is prominent.

Calvin usually begins his comment with a grammatical, historical signification of words. On Psalms 45 he says: “the Psalmist commends other princely virtues in Solomon, namely, the eternal duration of his throne.” He explains the virtue of Solomon’s throne: “the simple and natural sense is, that Solomon reigns not tyrannically, as most kings do, but by just and equal laws, and that, therefore, his throne shall be established for ever.” Then Calvin proceeds to a typological signification of the natural sense:

Hitherto, I have explained the text in the literal sense. But it is necessary that I should now proceed to illustrate somewhat more largely the comparison of Solomon with Christ... It would be quite sufficient for the pious and humble simply to state what is obvious, from the usual tenor of Scripture, that the posterity of David typically represented Christ to the ancient people of God.\textsuperscript{146}

According to Weemse’s own terms, the former signification is \textit{sensus propius}, a proper sense in the historical context, and the latter \textit{sensus remotius}, a prophetic application of the historical sense to Christ. In this text Weemse reads only \textit{sensus remotius}, seemingly because he understands the text more figuratively within Christian theological framework.

\textsuperscript{146} Calvin, \textit{Commentary}, Ps. 45:6-7.
Weemse’s more purely Christological line of exegesis in Psalms 110:1 shows a narrower point of view as compared to Calvin’s typological reading of the text. Calvin extends, in his comment on the text, the words “Jehovah said to my Lord” first, to David, second, to “all the kings of the earth,” since they are appointed by God, and then prophetically to Christ. Though Christ is the principal anti-type of David’s throne, Calvin sees an extended signification of the type to the historical figures of the Old Testament. Calvin indicates the influence of Jewish exegetical literature on his exegesis. On Isaiah 61:1, he comments: “The Jews laugh at this [prophetic reading], as an ill-advised application to Christ of that which is equally applicable to other prophets.”

Calvin even believes that David, the author of the Psalm, knew that the Messiah would come from his own lineage. “David spake by the spirit of prophecy, and consequently prophesied of the future reign of Christ.”

In conclusion of the comparison made above, Weemse’s exegesis of types, allegories, and Messianic passages of Scripture reveals both similarity and diversity as compared with the earlier Reformers, especially Calvin. Weemse’s exegetical principles—as represented by his broad understanding of the literal sense, strict limitation of allegory to the prescribed ones in Scripture, typological interpretation of the figures,

---

147 Calvin, *Commentary*, Isa. 61:1; *Westminster* Annotations, Isa. 61:1; Cf. Schper records that Lively was accused by Broughton for “judaizing” Christian exegesis by employing Jewish teaching that the term Messiah was referred to the general officers of Israel, in “Christian Hebraists,” p. 215.

148 Calvin, *Commentary*, Ps. 110:1; Cf. similar comment by Ainsworth who says in the Preface to his *Annotations upon Psalms* that “he [David] (being a Prophet) knew that hee [the Messiah] should be the fruit of his loines concerning the flesh, and should sit upon his throne, whose incarnation, afflictions, death, resurrection, ascension, and eternall glorious kingdome and priesthood, he sang by the Spirit.”
customs, and ceremonies of the Old Testament, and the theological scheme of
prophecies and their fulfillment in the New—show a close similarity to Calvin’s
exegetical principles. Weemse’s description of the simple and compound literal senses
must be emphasized as a progress in the history of interpretation for defining the literal
sense based on earlier Reformed theology. His exegetical practice, however, reveals
some diversity even with the same principles of interpretation. The diversity in Weemse
is known in two categories: one is his broader application of the literal sense for the
churchly setting, and the other is his broader understanding of types. As seen above, this
diversity is shared by no small number of exegetes in seventeenth-century orthodoxy.
Chapter Eight

Conclusion

In the introduction this dissertation proposed to test two assessments of earlier modern scholarship. They are, first, whether the post-Reformation biblical hermeneutics was dogmatic and rationalistic; and secondly, what kind of relationship the orthodox biblical hermeneutics had with the earlier interpretive approaches of Renaissance humanism and the Reformation. The answer to the former question will help to explain the nature of seventeenth-century biblical hermeneutics; and the answer to the latter question will place biblical hermeneutics in its proper relationship to humanism and Reformation theology. This section returns to these two questions by way of summary and conclusion, highlighting the major features of post-Reformation orthodox biblical hermeneutics, with John Weemse as a representative of the interpretive mind of the period. It will review the humanist progress in tri-lingual, textual, and philological scholarship of early seventeenth-century England; this scholarship’s use of scholastic tools and other sciences for Christian interpretive practice; and the final result of all this highly scholarly approach to Scripture, namely, the churchly, pre-critical interpretation of the Reformed orthodoxy—all with specific reference to Weemse.

Early seventeenth-century biblical hermeneutics continued to reflect the encounter of the theological tradition with humanist linguistic scholarship that had characterized the
era of the Reformation. Nonetheless, there was development and change, specifically in the rise of Christian Hebraism and the increasing effort to bring Judaica to bear on the exegesis of the Old Testament. This changing hermeneutical situation within orthodox theology, in its effort to maintain Reformation doctrines for the church, provided continuity with the earlier Reformers’ doctrines of Scripture and its interpretation and at the same time made progress in terms of text-critical scholarship of Scripture from the earlier stage of Reformation study. The early seventeenth-century “pre-critical” understanding of Scripture with its emphasis on the language of the text, theological leaning, and practical use indicates a substantial continuity with the medieval and Reformation study of Scripture. Its theological stress on the singleness of the literal sense of Scripture, the broad understanding of the literal sense, and the use of typology reflect considerable continuity with the early Reformers.

The Protestant orthodox exegetes, like their sixteenth-century predecessors, follow this interpretive pattern in understanding the types of the Old Testament and their fulfillment in the New. By using the term “compound” literal sense Weemse not only defines the literal sense but also clarifies the harmony and relationship of both Testaments. Within this understanding, while the words themselves of the Old Testament signify the Hebrew history, the things signified by the words in turn signify other things, which eventually lead to the spiritual sense, through typological or figurative interpretation.
The orthodox used all the available scholarly tools to understand the literal sense of Scripture within the theological sum of the analogy of faith for the purpose of providing practical edification for the church. In essence, orthodox biblical hermeneutics does not belong to the medieval practice of spiritual interpretation, nor to rigid, wooden formulation of doctrines out of Scripture, nor to the modern, scientific historical-critical interpretation, but stood in general continuity with the Reformation interpretive method with its continued emphasis on the broadly defined literal sense and the employment of emerging tools of Rabbinica and Judaica. The problem of so-called “twofold truth”—truth of religion and truth of modern philosophy and science—did not yet pose trouble to theology of the early seventeenth century.¹ Theology was based on the pre-modern exegesis of Scripture. Scientific discoveries of Galileo and modern philosophical development of Descartes and Spinoza began to give considerable impact to theology only in the last years of the century.²

Renaissance humanism played a significant role in shaping orthodox biblical hermeneutics. The growing interest of the Protestants to study Scripture in its original languages was in fact a debt to Renaissance humanism by way of its newer study with trilingual benefits. The shift in hermeneutics that moved further away from the old

quadriga toward a more literal meaning of Scripture was fueled by the employment of

¹ Cf. an opposite view of Willey, Seventeenth Century Background, pp. 32-37.
new learning, criticism, philology, and textual study of Scripture in Hebrew and Greek languages. In the course of reading, translating, and interpreting the Bible in its original languages, scholarly development of philological and linguistic studies of both Testaments became necessary.

With this need in mind, though late compared to the development on the continent, Englishmen established tri-lingual colleges and installed Regius professors of biblical languages in the middle of the sixteenth century. Weemse was an early product of a tri-lingual college in Scotland under the tutelage of Andrew Melville. When these tri-lingual colleges were established, British Hebraism was behind compared to that of the continent until the beginning of the seventeenth century. But with the generation of Broughton, Ainsworth, and Weemse, the British approached the level of competence of continental Hebraist study. Weemse was in fact a transitional figure who brought English Hebraism to an equally competent level so that the following generation, such as Lightfoot, Walton, and Pocock excelled in Christian Hebraism.

As a result of this intellectual advancement and influence from the continent, by the early years of the seventeenth century, many Hebrew texts, Hebrew dictionaries and lexicons, grammars, rabbinic commentaries on the Bible, works on Jewish philosophy and customs, and other diverse Jewish writings became available for Christian use through a series of introductions and translations by Jewish converts and Christian scholars and Latin summaries of Jewish books. Among these works, Buxtorf’s publication of the Rabbinic Bible, lexical works of Hebrew and Aramaic, and other
theological and philological works provided an enormous service for Christian scholars reading, translating, and interpreting the Bible. Along with his philological works Buxtorf brought to the Christians' attention much information on Jewish customs and tradition. These works of the early Christian Hebraists opened a new era of biblical studies.

Weemse's delineation of biblical hermeneutics proves that the seventeenth-century biblical interpretation was not wholly dogmatic, but a refined hermeneutics developed on a Renaissance model, using Hebraica and Judaica for the benefit of Reformed theology. His five means for biblical understanding document his scholarly approach to biblical interpretation for orthodox theologians. He was well aware that these means of biblical interpretation were comparatively new to his English contemporaries' study of the Bible. Weemse's studies of the masoretic text and margin, right pointing of the text, various translations, comparison of one text with others in Scripture are fine examples of scholarly textual study by orthodox theologians. Besides this textual study, his broad knowledge of Hebrew literary conventions, customs, and tradition documents his debt to the humanist approach to biblical interpretation. For the textual and cultural study of the Hebrew Bible, Weemse used his wide reading of rabbinic literature and intermediary Christian authors like Buxtorf, Drusius, and Scaliger, and translations of Junius and Tremellius.

In this era of developing textual and philological scholarship, Weemse's theories and practices of biblical interpretation indicate neither dogmatic rejection of the
scholarship nor full-fledged use of the scholarship for scientific use, but rather a
reserved combination of a scholarly critical judgement and theological use of them for a
Christian cause. The result of this combination is a scholarly philology of reading
Scripture under the traditional doctrine of Scripture. The tension in theology and critical
scholarship is found only at a later time in academic theology, as found between the
philological approach of exegesis in Heinsius and theological approach in Beza and
L’Empereur, though all of these wrote in a Calvinist theological framework.3

Weemse accepted the results of critical scholarship concerning the Hebrew
vowel-points before his contemporaries; however, the acceptance did not change his view
of Scripture. He accepted the Rabbinic critical scholarship because he judged its
conclusion was textually and historically true. His critical judgement did not contradict
his orthodoxy, but made him use the critical scholarship to maintain the traditional
doctrine of Scripture and its interpretation. He established the purity and integrity of
Scripture upon the Jewish preservation of the Hebrew Bible in their synagogue. He held
to the opinion of the Rabbis that though marginal notes were not originally from the
biblical authors, they have the same authority of the text for they provide important
explanations of the text itself. The double reading of text and margin of the masoretic
text fits perfectly his Christian conviction that Scripture interprets Scripture and therefore
that it has perfect harmony in itself.

---

Weemse’s textual study with use of masoretic scholarship results in a rich, nuanced doctrine of Scripture. For example, his reception of a certain rabbinic tradition that the Jewish scribes altered certain seemingly immodest terms into more modest terms requires a nuanced definition of his Christian conviction that the Hebrew text is pure and perfect. Similarly, Weemse’s textual study of Num. 12:3, which he reads “Moses was very meeke above all the men,” shows his rabbinic influence that there are scribal additions to the Bible. He says: “this verse seemeth to have beene added by Joshua, or by Esdras, rather than set downe by Moses himselfe, for there are many things insert by the men of God in Moses writings, which were not insert by Moses himselfe.”⁴ Weemse resolves all seemingly difficult passages of Scripture within the scribal tradition of the Jewish synagogue. This Jewish scribal tradition does not alter his Christian doctrine of Scripture, but he believes that it perfectly fits with his strong doctrine of biblical inspiration and his understanding of Christ’s words, “one jote, or one tittle of the Law shall not passe,” to refer to the purity of Scripture in its entire whole.⁵

Weemse’s instrumental use of humanistic tools is similar to his use of scholastic method. For Weemse, the two are not contradictory or incompatible to each other but supported a common goal. While humanistic tools of understanding text in its original languages offer Weemse a better access to the proper sense of Scripture, scholastic tools

---


provide him with a handy method with which he formulates and redefines the
teaching of Scripture into theology and preaching.

Weemse says in “An Advertisement to the Reader for the right using of School-
divinitie” in his Portraiture:

The Schoolmen say well, Rationes praecedentes minuant fidem; sed
rationes subsequentes augent fidem, Reasons going before faith weaken
faith, but reasons coming after faith strengthen it... School divinity hath
most incroched upon the truth and obscured it; framing all religion
according to the platforme of philosophie... Although this Schoole
divinity hath beene mightily abused, yet the abuse takes not away the use.⁶

For Weemse, the issue of scholasticism is not whether he uses all of it or rejects all of it,
but the right use of it. Weemse’s use of “distinction” and logic in his work shows
significant marks of his using scholasticism. He says about the right use of “distinction”:

This Schoole Theologie (so far as it advanceth humane Philosophy, and is
abused, or obscureth the truth of the Gospell,) they make it a part of the
smoake which comes out of the bottomlesse pit... They referre this to their
idle distinctions, Nicholas Clamanges compares them to the Apples of
Sodome; which have a faire skinne, but are full of rottennesse within...
Some of their distinctions being purged from barbaritie, and applied
clearly, may have good use. The Iewes have a Proverbe... Eate Dates,
but cast out their stones.⁷

Weemse’s instrumental use of elements of scholastic method is to be understood
within the unified view of truth. The problem of “double truth,” which was presented by
incompatible natural reason and faith, and the threat from science and mathematics were
not seen in early seventeenth-century exegesis. For orthodox theologians and exegetes,

⁶ Weemse, Portraiture, in Works [1636], vol. 1, “Advertisement”; For right use of reason see idem.,
⁷ Weemse, Synagogue, in Works [1636], vol. 1, p. 276.
truth was regarded as indivisible. By declaring the traditional dictum, "other Sciences and Artes are but handmaids to Divinity," Weemse called for a unified system of human activities under a biblically understood worldview. Weemse, for example, rejected the Copernican revolution of astronomy as being contradictory to the biblical data.

Knowledge of natural science, astronomy, and human anatomy was shaped by the Ptolemaic worldview that was controlled by a pre-critical understanding of theology.  

Within this view, the orthodox or scholastic Protestant rejects all distinctions made and used by medieval theologians that obscured doctrine. For example, Perkins had rejected the distinction of a double fulfillment of the law, one for this life (to love God and neighbors) and the other for the eternal life (to love God will all the soul, power, and strength). Perkins did not categorically reject the use of distinction, but found a proper use for distinction, namely, for instance, the threefold use of the law. Similarly, Weemse used certain distinctions for clarification of the doctrine. In the section "of the highest degree of mans love to God," Weemse makes three distinctions to make his point clear. First, Paul's words "I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren" is to be understood as voluntas conditionata that is distinguished from voluntas sub conditio as in Christ's words "this cup might pass." Weemse proceeds to explain

---

8 Weemse, Exercitations, in Works [1636], vol. 3, p. 5.  


10 Perkins, An Exposition upon the five first chapters of the Epistle to the Galatians, in Works [1609], vol. 2, pp. 422-24.
the concept of humanity that in some aspects of his nature man shares God's nature, by making distinction between *similitudine natura* and *communione falicitatis*. Then, he moves to argue that the godly has a natural inclination, one for his own particular good and the other for the good of the whole. In order to make this point, Weemse uses Aristotle's distinction between motion *ad sui conservationem* and motion *ad conservationem universi.*

Weemse's theological works indicate a pattern of combining all the best available tools and methods of his day. His typical writing pattern shows (1) that textual and philological study plays the central role; (2) that Scholastic method is employed to clarify, argue, defend, and extend the meaning drawn from biblical exegesis; (3) that Jewish commentaries, rabbinic literature, and the Talmud are often used to support his claim; (4) that occasionally, authorities of church Fathers and philosophers are employed, either positively or negatively, to support his claims, and (5) that the meaning drawn from biblical exegesis and argued by various authorities is applied to churchly teaching and preaching. This pattern of writing theological treatise evidences a scholarly work based on highly exegetical study rather than a dogmatic use of Scripture as proof-texts.

Reformed orthodox interpretation of Scripture continued within the pre-critical interpretive tradition, the result of which is more closely related to the medieval and

---

Reformation exegesis rather than the modern historical-critical method. The instrumental use of scholastic tools as well as humanistic techniques in both Reformation and post-Reformation theologies shows, as discussed in the latter part of this section, that Freiday's assessment does not apply.

The seventeenth-century orthodox continuity with medieval and Reformation exegesis, however, must be qualified by identification of differences and development. For example, Dickson is partly right when he says that the result of the seventeenth-century exegesis is the same as that of the medieval quadrige. Yet, seventeenth-century biblical hermeneutics was not a return to medieval quadrige. The orthodox focused on the literal meaning of the text but still produced the breath of meaning for the church that the quadrige identified. For the orthodox, figurative senses previously identified as allegorical, tropological, and anagogical meanings, were recognized within the nature and use of the Bible language and used within the boundary of churchly edification. Though there was, in the middle of the seventeenth century, growing concern for historical, cultural divergence between the periods of the authors and the readers, the orthodox reading of Scripture was predominantly governed by the "spiritual" and churchly interpretation that viewed Scripture as the living Word of God speaking directly to the present church. In essence, the orthodox biblical interpretation is churchly spiritual rather

---

than rationalistically unspiritual, governed by the traditional analogy of faith rather
than jealously dogmatic.

The contrast with the Reformation is illustrated by both the return of academic or
"scholastic" styles and the more radical change marked by the concentrated use of
Judaica in biblical interpretation. Here the biblicism of the Reformation and the
philological emphasis of Renaissance humanism are intensified by immersion in the
language. Weemse’s concentration on philological study is well illustrated in his epistle
to the young divines, part of which is already discussed, in the Christian Synagogue.

After setting up the foundational goal for studying theology as “to be holy,” Weemse
goes on to explain the proper method of biblical study:

The second thing which I would recommend to you (my brethren) is, the
study of the holy Scriptures in their owne proper languages, the Hebrew
and the Greeke; so that they speak not to you by an interpreter; and that
the proverbe in the Talmud, may not be applied to you... for to reade the
Scriptures without considering the originall, is nothing but a standing in
the doore, and never entering within the house; you either cannot, or else
you will not. Those that cannot are to bee excused; but those that will not,
let them heare what God saith in the prophecie of Hosea, Because thou
hast despised knowledge, I will also despise thee, that thou shalt bee no
more priest to me. Looke first to the excellencie of the Hebrew tongue,
which is knowne, first, Harmonice, (by the sound thereof) comparing it
with all other tongues, it borrowes of none, but all borrow of it. Secondly,
it is knowne Etymologice, by the derivation thereof, for the names that are
derived, are either true, allusive, or false... Thirdly, if the grace, efficacy,
and perspicuity of this Language bee considered, it will stirre up a great
delight in thee. Here yee shall not finde the stammering tongue of
Moyses, nor the polluted lippes of Esay, nor Jeremy speaking as a child;
but yee shall heare the Lord himselfe speaking; Who spake as never man
spake. Leave the rotten Cisternes, praise the Rivers, but commend the
Fountains above all. Ye have many helps now, which your Fathers had not in former ages. All of Weemse’s theories of biblical hermeneutics, cited above, namely, his keen concentration on biblical languages, the masoretic study of the Hebrew text, and use of Jewish customs and tradition, find expression in his various expositions of the Old Testament. Chapter five discussed the first four of the “five helps,” highly scholarly, textual and philological tools for reading Scripture, and the sixth chapter discussed the fifth help—the use of Hebrew customs and tradition for Christian exegesis. Weemse was fully aware of the new benefits of employing these five tools for reading Scripture that his predecessors did not know. The early seventeenth-century textual and philological approach to reading Scripture belies modern pejorative assessments of its biblical hermeneutics as using Scripture as a mere proof-text for dogmatic orientation.

Weemse’s pre-critical understanding of Scripture leads to his use of Scripture as a true and normative resource for the present church regardless of time and place. The Reformers and many of their successors in the seventeenth century viewed the Bible as a whole record of the reality of God that touches, corrects, and nourishes the whole church of God. This position was completely different from the annotation tradition of humanism that treated classical texts from an objective historical and literary point of view. The orthodox treated Scripture as a completely unique, sacred revelation of God and assumed a realistic exposition of the Old Testament characters for the Christian life here and now. For the Reformed orthodox, the stories in the Old Testament, as Sheppard

---

13 Weemse, Synagogue, in *Works* [1636], vol. 1, the Epistles to the Studious young Divines.
describes, "correspond realistically to our lives; the lives in the Bible and our lives pertain to the same vision of reality as revealed by God through Scripture."\textsuperscript{14}

From this scheme of understanding Scripture and its characters it becomes clear how Weemse expounds the ceremonies, the laws, and commandments of the Old Testament. The law, understood as the Mosaic law or sometimes all Scripture, but especially the Decalogue, as the law's central part, bind all of humanity. Though the law is treated as part of the old covenant, it has direct relevance for the faith and practice of the redeemed. This is precisely why Weemse with other Reformed theologians dedicated such efforts to expounding the meaning of the Decalogue. Not only from the formal laws but also from the ceremonies and examples of the biblical characters does Weemse find true and normative rules for the Christian life.

Appendix

Propositions

1. John Weemse, the early seventeenth-century English exegete and Hebraist, produced highly philological and textual exegesis of Scripture that was combined with his broad knowledge of Jewish customs and tradition. His exegetical work exhibits a scholarly treatment of the masoretic text of the Hebrew Bible and use of various rabbinic sources.

2. Theology of the past should be examined with consideration of equally weighty concepts of continuity and discontinuity with the preceding and following theologies.

3. Imaginary uniformity of interpretive pattern hinders modern scholars from correctly understanding post-Reformation continuity with and development of the earlier Reformation exegesis.

4. The doctrine of Scripture should be studied not only in a dogmatic fashion, regarding such traditional subjects as, for example, its inspiration and divine authorship, but also in a textual and philological fashion. As seventeenth-century practice testifies, masoretic and rabbinic materials provide many helps for developing such a Christian doctrine of Scripture.

5. Biblical interpretation was an important theological subject in the seventeenth century because Reformed orthodox theology was governed by the long-held Christian tradition that God and Scripture were the two foundational principles for theology.
6. One important mark of post-Reformation exegesis is its practical combination of
the theological significance of a single literal sense with an ecclesiastically defined
spiritual application of the literal sense.

7. In Numbers 11:15, הַר נָּבִי, Moses is said to cry to God with a
personal pronoun which appears to be feminine. Weemse was correct when he said
that the Jewish grammatical and literary convention should be examined to
understand the reason for its use.

8. **Analogia fidei** in the early seventeenth century was not used for dogmatic control of
biblical interpretation. It was intended and accordingly used as a summary of the
whole Scripture, drawn from clearer passages of Scripture, to be a broad boundary for
orthodox teaching of the church.

9. Scholasticism and humanism conjoined methodologically in the post-Reformation
biblical interpretation for upholding and arguing for traditional Protestant doctrines.

10. The cosmological problems of Galileo’s scientific discoveries and the negative
influences of Descartes’ and Spinoza’s philosophical development were not
registered by the theology of the first half of the seventeenth century.

11. The Jewish concept of *advena porta* (strangers within the gate) and the similar Jewish
reading of Canticle 8:8 as “we have a little sister, what shall we do for her?” provide
insight for modern Christian ethics.

12. The doctrine of atonement should be contextualized within the corporate concept of
humanity in the Bible. For modern individualistic concepts of sin, debt, and
forgiveness draw an essential contradiction between Christ’s vicarious sacrifice as
satisfaction for sin and God’s forgiveness.
13. Interpretation of the concept and nature of the millennium in the Bible may be influenced by the history and culture in which they are interpreted.

14. The nature of biblical language that the Bible was written in the Hebrew male-oriented fashion should allow neither a male-oriented interpretation of the Bible nor devaluation of the Fatherhood, lordship, and kingship of God.

15. The Kingdom of God is best understood when its universal aspect (*regnum potentiae*) and soteriological aspect (*regnum gratiae*) are properly combined in its present realm. The Kingdom of God envisions the reflection of God’s sovereign will and power that appeared in the original creation in the present Christian activities both in interpersonal relationships and in relationships with other creatures in creation.

16. A dwarf on the shoulder of a giant can see farther than the giant himself sees.
Selected Bibliography

I. Works of John Weemse

*The Workes of Mr. John Weemse of Lathocker in Scotland, in these volumes. Containing these eight booke...* Serving generally for a helpe to the understanding of all that desire to know and obey the will of God in holy writt; But more specially for all young Students in Divinitie, that they may more easily understand the languages of Canaan, Greece, and make a profitable use of them in Preaching.... London, Thomas Cotes for John Bellamy, 1636.

*The Christian Synagogue. Wherein is contained the diverse Reading, The right Pointing, Translation, and Collation of Scripture with Scripture. With the Customes of the Hebrewes and Proselytes, and of all those Nations, with whom they were conversant....* London, Thomas Cotes for John Bellamy, 1633.

*Exercitations Divine. Containing diverse Questions and Solutions for the right understanding of the Scriptures. Proving the necessitie, Majestie, integritie, perspicuitie, and sense thereof... together with the excellencie and use of Divinitie above all human Sciences. All which are cleared out of the Hebrew, and Greeke, the two original languages in which the Scriptures were first written....* London, Thomas Cotes for John Bellamy, 1632.

*An Exposition of the Ceremonial Lawes of Moses, as they are annexed to the tenne commandments. Wherein are cleared divers customs of the Jews, and also the customs of the Gentiles, as they have relation to the Jewish, out of the Originall Tongues, the Hebrew and Greeke... all serving to let us see how they leade us as types to Jesus Christ....* London, M. Dawson for John Bellamie, 1636.

*An Exposition of the Judicial Lawes of Moses, Plainely discovering divers of their ancient Rites and Customes. As in their Governours, Government, Synedrion, Punishments, Civill Accompts, Contracts, Marriages, Warres, and Burials. Also Oeconomicks, (vizt,) their dwellings, Feasting, Colthing, and Husbandrie....* London, M. Dawson for John Bellamie, 1636.
The Workes of Mr. John Weemse of Lathocker in Scotland. the second Volumne.  
Containing an Exposition of the Morall Law, or Ten Commandments of Almightie God, wherein is contained an explanation of diverse Questions and Positions for the right understanding thereof.... London, Thomas Cotes for John Bellamie, 1636.

Observations, Naturall and Morall. With Short Treatise of the Numbers, Weights, and Measures, used by the Hebrewes; with the valuation of them according to the Measures of the Greeks and Romans. For the clearing of sundry places of Scripture, in which these weights and measures are set downe by way of Allusion. London, M. Dawson for John Bellamie, 1636.

The Portraiture of the Image of God in Man. In his three estates, of Creation, Restauration, Glorification. Digested into two parts. The first containing, the Image of God both in the Body and Soule of Man... the second containing, the passions of man in the concupiscible and irascible part of the soule...all set downe by way of collation, and cleared by sundry distinctions, both out of the Schoolemen, and moderne Writers. London, Thomas Cotes for John Bellamie, 1636.

A Treatise of the Foure Degenerate Sonnes, viz. The Atheist, the Idolater, the Magician, and the Jew. Wherein are handled many profitable questions concerning Atheisme, Witchcraft, Idolatry, and Judaisme; and sundry places of Scripture, cleared out of the Originall Tongues.... London, Thomas Cotes for John Bellamie, 1636.

Synagoga Christiana, Docens S. Scripturae, I. Sensus genuinum, II. Confirmationem, Illustrationem, Applicationem, III. Legitiman ac compendiosam, sensum indagandi rationem.... Ludguni Batavorum, 1660.

II. Manuscripts

Durham Dean & Chapter Muniments, Chapter Acts 7 June 1634, Archives and Special Collections, University Library, University of Durham.

Durham Dean & Chapter Muniments, Treasurer’s Book 25, 1633-34, folio 3v;26, 1635-36, folio 4v., Archives and Special Collections, University Library, University of Durham.

Testaments of John Weemse, CC15/5/3 ff.51r-52v, Scottish Record Office, The National Archives of Scotland.
III. Primary Works of the Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Centuries


_______. *The Booke of Psalms: Englised both in Prose and Metre, With Annotations, opening the words and sentences, by conference with other Scriptures*. Amsterdam, 1612.


Ben Chajim, Jacob. *Introduction to the Rabbinic Bible*. Venice, 1520-23.


_______. *An Apologie in briefe assertions defending that our Lord died in the time properly foretold to Daniel*, London, 1592.

_______. *Daniel, Lamentations and Job*, Hanover, 1607.

_______. and Ainsworth, *Certayne Questions... handled between Hugh Broughton and Henry Ainsworth*, Hanover, 1605.


______. The Jewish Synagogue or An Historical Narration of the State of the Jewes.... tr. A: B: Mr. A. of Queens College in Oxford, London, 1657.


______. Ioannis Calvini Opera quae supersunt omnia... 59 vols, Brunsvigae, apud C. A. Schwetschke et filium, 1863-1900.


Cunaeus, De Republica Hebraeorum libri III. Lugduni Batavorum, 1617.


Drusius, Joseph C. De Sectis Judaicis commentarii. Arnhemiae, 1619.
Eisenmenger, Johann Andreas. *Rabbinical Literature: or. The traditions of the Jews. contained their Talmud and other mystical writings. Likewise the opinions of that people concerning Messiah. and the time and manner of his appearing: with an appendix comprizing Buxtorf's account of the religious customs and ceremonies of that nation...* London. 1748.

Fagius, Paul. *Sententiae vere eleganties, piae, mireque, cum ad linguam discedam, tum animum pietate excolendum utiles, veterum sapientum Hebraeorum.* Isny, 1541.


Gataker, Thomas. et al. *Annotations upon all the Books of the Old and New Testament, wherein the Text is Explained, Doubts Resolved, Scriptures Paralleled, and Various Readings observed.* by the joynt-Labour of certain Learned Divines... London, 1645.


Godwin, Thomas. *Moses and Aaron: Civil and Ecclesiastical Rites, Used by the Ancient Hebrewes; Observed, and at large Opened, for the Clearing of Many Obsolete Texts thorowout the Whole Scripture... Herein Likewise is Shewed What Customes the Hebrewes Borrowed from Heathen People: And that Many Heathenishe customjes, Originally have been Unwarrantable Imitations of the Hebrewes.* London, 1655.

Grotius, Hugo. *Annotationes in libros Evangeliorum.* Amsterdam, 1641.

*Annotationes ad Libros de veritate religionis Christianae.* Lugduni Batavorum, 1640.
Haak, Theodore. *The Dutch Annotations upon the Whole Bible: or, All the Holy Canonical Scriptures of the Old and New Testament,* together with, and according to their own Translation of all the Text: As both the one and the other were ordered and appointed by the Synod of Dort, 1618. And published by Authority, 1637. 2 vols. London, 1657.


Illyricus, Flacius, *Clavis Scripturae Sacrae.* 1567, repr. at Jena in 1674.


Keach, Benjamin. *Tropologia: A Key to Open Scripture Metaphors,* in Four Books to which are prefixed, Arguments to Prove the Divine Authority of the Holy Bible together with Types of the Old Testament. London, 1680, reissued in 1769.


Lively, Edward. *Annotationes in quinque priores ex minoribus Prophetis cum Latina
Lukin, Henry. *An Introduction to the Holy Scripture, Containing the several Tropes, Figures, Proprieties of Speech used therein; with other Observations, necessary for the right Understanding thereof.* London, 1669.


Mayer, John. *A Commentary upon all the Prophets both Great and Small: wherein the divers Translations and Expositions both Literal and Mystical of all the most famous Commentators both Ancient and Modern are propounded.* London, 1652.

———. *A Commentarie upon the New Testament. Representing the divers expositions thereof, out of the workes of the most learned, both ancient Fathers, and moderne Writers,* 3 vols. London, 1631.


———. *Dictionarium Chaldaicum.* Basel, 1527.

———. *Chaldaica Grammatica.* Basel, 1526.


_____ A Commentarie, or, Exposition upon the five first Chapters of the Epistle to the Galatians. London, 1617, in Workes, vol. 2.

_____ The Arte of Prophecying. Or A Treatise concerning the Sacred and Onely True Manner and Methode of Preaching... Cambridge, 1609, in Workes, vol. 2.


_____ Exposition upon the Prophet Obadiah. London, 1562.

_____ Exposition upon certain chapters of Nehemiah. London, 1585.


_____ A Sermon upon part of the eighteenth Psalm. Oxford, 1586.


_____ Commentarii in librum secundum Mosis. Lugduni Batavorum, 1634.


_____ Elenchus Trihaeresii Nicolai Seraii. Franekeræ, 1605.
Prolegomena... praemisit, notas...subiectit, denique indices...addidit Evaldus Scheibel. repr. 1852.

Smith, John. *The Mysterie of Rhetorique Unveil'd, Wherein above 130 the Tropes and Figures are severally derived from the Greek into English; together with lively Definitions and Variety of Latin, English, Scriptural Examples*... London, 1665.


Moses and Aaron, or the Types and Shadows of our Saviour in the old Testament. Opened and Explained. London, 1653.


The Considerator Considered. 1659, repr. by Henry John Todd as the second


White, John. A Way to the Tree of Life: Discovered in Sundry Directions for the Profitable Reading of the Scriptures: Wherein is described occasionally The nature of a Spiritual Man.... London, 1647.

Willet, Andrew. Hexapla in Genesin, that is, A Sixfold Commentary upon Genesis... Cambridge, 1605; 2nd ed., enlarged, 1608.


IV. Secondary Works


Edgar, John. *History of Early Scottish Education*. Edinburgh: James Thin, Publisher to the University, 1893.


________. "The Significance of the Word of God for Calvin," *Church History* 28/2 (June 1959):131-146.


________. *Christ and Decree: Christology and Predestination in Reformed Theology from Calvin to Perkins.* Durham: The Labyrinth Press, 1986.


"Luther and Biblical Infallibility," in Inerrancy and the Church, pp. 99-142.

"The View of the Bible held by the Church: the Early Church through Luther," in Inerrancy, pp. 357-382.


Van der Walt. "Was Calvin a Calvinist or was/is Calvinism Calvinistic?" in *Our Reformational Tradition: A Rich Heritage and Lasting Vocation*. Potschefstroom University for Christian Higher Education, 1984.


