Abstract: Hugo Grotius’ early political career spanned the decade which led up to the constitutional crisis of the young Dutch Republic in 1618, and was in fact cut short by this dramatic event. In the tract here under consideration, which dates from well before that day, the young genius takes stock of the essential shortcomings of the prevailing Dutch constitution and first addresses the never-abating rivalries and inveterate provincialism—so inherent to aristocratic republicanism—which two decades later were to unsettle the precarious balance. ‘De Republica Emendanda’ stands out as a first token of young Grotius’ acute political awareness and, in terms of methodology, of his essentially humanist approach to political studies. More than this, the tract attests to the paramount role reserved for the Hebrew tradition as the paradigm model of the Calvinist Dutch commonwealth.

Dutch Political Hebraism

Within the wider context of the fascinating early modern European phenomenon we have now come to identify as political Hebraism, the Dutch chapter constitutes a truly intriguing phase. Far from being a mere academic exercise, political Hebraism in the Dutch Republic was prompted by urgent social debate. Indeed, it was part of a very deliberate reflection on a prolonged political crisis, in an attempt, however futile, to help avert catastrophe. The gist and drift of the Dutch Revolt can be summed up in its leading mottos Haec Libertatis Ergo (This Is for the Sake of Freedom) and Haec Religionis Ergo (This Is for the Sake of Religion)—and so can the constitutional crisis of the young Republic. As would soon dawn on
the Dutch, political tolerance and Calvinist orthodoxy made for poor bedfellows.\textsuperscript{1} The crisis came to a head in 1618, with the \textit{coup d'état} by Prince Maurice of Orange, which sealed the fate of the early aristocratic republic and yet did not resolve the riddle that had brought that political experiment to its knees.\textsuperscript{2} The small corpus of tracts that can be identified with political Hebraism eminently addressed the two signal defects of the early Republic throughout: the absence of a sense of unity and of religious tolerance.

Dutch political Hebraism, aside from being acutely linked to political circumstances, also coincided, and not incidentally so, with two other phenomena, one being of an intellectual nature, the other of a social nature. The first was the rise of Hebrew studies and biblical research at Leiden University, the other the growing influx of Jews, mostly merchants, into the United Provinces as a result of political circumstance elsewhere in Europe.\textsuperscript{3} The close interrelation of all these elements has, in the present author's opinion, not been appreciated to the full by modern research.

Symptomatic of this circumstance is the relative disinterest of scholars regarding the most representative tract of the period in this field, Petrus Cunaeus’ \textit{De Republica Hebraeorum} (\textit{On the Republic of the Hebrews}), due

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mostly to ignorance of its acute social commitment. Far from being a work of speculation and mere historical research, Cunaeus’ treatise was urged, if nothing else, by the complexities of the Remonstrant troubles. Indeed, as is amply attested to by its beseeching letter of dedication to the States of Holland, the treatise was precisely meant as a piece of advice to help steer the States’ policy. It was, in fact, a fairly courageous attempt on the part of the gifted Leiden professor of political science to voice what he saw as his personal responsibility to the benefit of the public domain, and to put all his learning and authority as a foremost Hebrew scholar at the service of his nation’s future.4

But modern scholarship has also neglected to investigate the links between Cunaeus’ treatise and another intriguing tract of the period, that here under consideration, Hugo Grotius’ *De Republica Emendanda* (On How to Emend the Dutch Polity). These links too can be easily established. In all likelihood, it was Hugo Grotius who inspired Cunaeus’ work in the first place. Both the genesis and later reorientation of Cunaeus’ treatise attest to his having been intellectually and politically backed by this dear friend of his, who was the foremost political thinker and publicist of the period. In addition to this, Grotius’ many works on the relationship between state and church in the years leading up to the crisis of 1618 were, without exception, reviewed prior to their publication by Cunaeus. Indeed, in some cases these works were actually withheld from publication at the instigation of the small circle of tried and trusted friends, Cunaeus among them, on whom Grotius relied unreservedly.5

If Grotius’ *De Republica Emendanda* of around 1600 was a counsel’s plea aimed at the revision of the Dutch constituency by reference to the ancient Hebrew constitution, Cunaeus’ *De Republica Hebraeorum* of 1617 served precisely as a reminder to the States of Holland of the innate shortcomings which had brought down that ancient model confederacy, the republic of the Hebrews, these defects being, in the author’s appraisal,

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5 Grotius notably sent copies of his *Meletius, Ordinum Pietas*, and *De Satisfactione Christi* to Cunaeus for review purposes. See the introductory notes in Edwin Rabbie’s critical editions of *Ordinum Pietas* (Leiden: Brill, 1995) and *De Satisfactione* (Leiden: Brill, 1990).
the inevitable outcome of religious friction and fanaticism. The Hebrews had been affected by an ailment common to so many nations: civil strife. There is no other recipe, Cunaeus holds, to bring nations down so effectively. In fact, the Romans employed it in their foreign policy—and conquered the world. The Achaean League once, just like the Dutch League today, seemed invincible, based as it was on inner strength, unity, and inviolable laws. This until the Romans, “the plague of the world” as they were once called, interfered. The technique Cunaeus cites as having been used by Jeroboam to divide the twelve tribes was to corrupt true religion and replace it with empty superstition: “What had been a battle about freedom and power came to be one about sacred rituals and places of worship.”

No phrase could have better summarized the acute problem of the Dutch Republic. From here, not surprisingly, the perspective of Cunaeus’ dedication shifts from Hebrew history to Dutch topicality:

You, State Members are aware, better than anyone, that harmony creates success as sure as disharmony causes ruin. Right now, after a long uphill battle, and thanks to your unity, you have reached the peaks of power. I feel confident that this unity will be preserved, and success will be durable. And yet... there is reason to draw lessons from the experience of others. Recently, factions and sections tend to multiply in our Republic. And the bones of contention seem to be rather obscure and fairly pointless issues of religious doctrine, which, most of the time, the rivaling factions don’t even understand themselves. The mobs, as usual are left to follow their whims and passions.6

From here, Cunaeus’ tenor becomes positively imploring:

It is in your interest to apply a timely remedy. Therefore, study, over and again, the fate of this holiest and best of all Republics.7

Grotius’ and Cunaeus’ tracts were flip sides of a coin. For all their differences of perspective, both essentially belong to that fascinating genre of state parallels, which were such a favorite tool for humanists to make

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6 Petrus Cunaeus, De Republica Hebraeorum (Leiden, 1617). While a translation of the entire work is forthcoming from Shalem Press, the first of the three books that compose this work can be found in an English translation by Clement Barksdale, The Commonwealth of the Hebrews (London, 1653), which is currently available with an introduction in Italian by Lea Campos Boralevi: Petrus Cunaeus, De Republica Hebraeorum (The Commonwealth of the Hebrews) (Florence: Centro Editoriale Toscano, 1996). Quotes here are my own translation and can be found in a slightly different form in the Boralevi edition on pp. 21–22.

their point. Actually, as can be established from Cunaeus’ correspondence, his tract was intended to be merely the first part of a far more ambitious program, namely the comprehensive comparison of a wide range of constitutions. In the end, the realization of this program was forestalled only by the author’s untimely death.

Dutch political Hebraism, in short, was spurred on by sociopolitical crisis if nothing else. Two of the foremost political minds of the period, Petrus Cunaeus and Hugo Grotius, may pose as its godfathers. In my introductory note on the new English edition of Cunaeus’ tract that is forthcoming from Shalem Press, I have elaborated on the complexities of Dutch society of the period and the immediate context of Cunaeus’ life and works. The present contribution focuses rather on Grotius and on the juvenile tract *De Republica Emendanda* as a first step toward the overall interpretation of Grotius’ personal views, academic research, and political tenets vis-à-vis contemporary Jewry, biblical and Hebrew studies, and the Dutch constituency, respectively. My two texts, that presented here and the forthcoming introduction, may be read as complementary and as preliminary to an overall interpretation of Dutch political Hebraism.

For, to be sure, as the widely acclaimed intellectual product of Scaliger’s school of biblical and Hebrew studies at Leiden and the self-imposed heir to the irenic legacy of Erasmus and Franciscus Junius, the intensely socially engaged Grotius—who was no less formidable as a theologian than as a lawyer and politician—could not fail to recurrently address the topical issues of his day and age, either at his own initiative or at the insistence of authorities and in an official capacity. In Grotius’ life and works all the vicissitudes of early-seventeenth-century Dutch society are eminently reflected. In 1614, Grotius was invited by the States of Holland to formulate an answer to the highly controversial immigration of Jews and define a formal state policy. Later on, in his great apology of Christianity, *De Veritate* (*On Truth*), he volunteered an influential analysis of ancient and contemporary Jewry. Finally, in his *Annotationes* (*Notes*) to the Testaments, he compiled a wealth of philological and historical research to the same purport. His contacts with Hebrew scholars, other than with the Jewish community, were impressive. This paper will insist on the urgency of the debate in the context of which Grotius wrote his *De Republica Emendanda* and will retrace the way in which he was first put on this lifelong quest.
Hugo Grotius: A First Appraisal

To our day and age, Hugo Grotius is almost exclusively renowned for his pioneering role in the domain of international law.\(^8\) Lost to the world at large, along with his many philological and poetical endeavors, are his impressive historical and exegetical pursuits, which never failed to charm the European world of humanism. With time, and due mainly to the sharp turn Western society took in subsequent decades, the lasting fame of “le miracle de la Hollande” came to rest on his *Laws of War and Peace*.\(^9\) Meanwhile, most of Grotius’ versatile intellectual pursuits date from his long years in exile following the sudden foundering of his dazzling political career, an event which, at home at least, would forever taint his reputation. Whatever Grotius’ merits may be in the eyes of the world at large, to the Dutch these can never be abstracted from his steering role in that first moment of crisis of the young Republic, the so-called Remonstrant troubles,\(^{10}\) troubles which, with hindsight, can be viewed as part of Europe’s deep intellectual crisis and the Dutch variation of that social tragedy which on the French stage prompted St. Bartholomew’s Day and in Britain the beheading of Charles I.

By that moment of crisis in 1618, Hugo Grotius—thirty-five at the time—was the widely acclaimed, up-and-coming man in the Dutch Republic, generally expected to become its first servant and *Landsadvocaat* in good time. Only three years later he found himself in Paris, in exile for the remainder of his days. He was, however, lucky enough to have escaped the scaffold by the narrowest of margins, and to have fled state prison and a life sentence by that romantic escape in a book chest which possibly inevitably registered his name in the realm of folklore. Grotius’ life, in short, epitomizes the drama of the early Dutch Republic. Documented to have been without peer, from his earliest teens he had been recruited to serve the public interest, first by the curators of Leiden University, then by leading Hague political circles, and shortly afterward by the administrators of that bulwark of Dutch pride, the VOC (*Verenigde Oostindische Compagnie*—East India Company). Still, Grotius first applied

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\(^8\) See, for example, Hedley Bull, Benedict Kingsbury, and Adam Roberts, eds., *Hugo Grotius and International Relations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990).

\(^9\) Hugo Grotius, *De jure belli ac pacis* (Paris, 1625).

his astounding genius toward the effort of putting a haphazard band of rebelling provinces on the map of Europe as a legitimate sovereign state. He was a leading actor in the making and a major victim in the disappointment of that experimental undertaking to attain a precarious political balance. Nor was his downfall incidental. In all frankness, the political riddle Grotius got entangled in was not to be solved throughout the full span of two centuries, until the Republic was finally rolled up as an anachronism in the Napoleonic onslaught. Prior to that, protagonists might change, and so might the labels of factions, their pretensions and pretenses, but, far from healing, the ulcer was only inflamed. Various moments of crisis, maimings of justice, and outbursts of violence would mark the road. Of the three most gifted politicians the Republic brought about, the first, Oldenbarnevelt, was beheaded, the second, Jan de Witt, lynched by the mobs; Grotius alone got away with his life.11

The drama of Grotius’ life might be said to equal the Achilles’ heel of his beloved country. Indeed, his never-ending struggle was aimed precisely at achieving the entwining of those two proud mottos raised on the banners of the Dutch Revolt that we signaled above, by helping to improve the country’s constitution and legislation and by settling the vexing issue of the relationship of church and state.12 Still, if on the European stage Grotius readily succeeded in becoming “the New Justinian” Justus Lipsius had been urging,13 within the domestic sphere his efforts to secure harmony (apart from the sphere of civil procedure)14 were mostly frustrated—as were the efforts of succeeding generations for that matter. The short tract that we will now discuss stands out as Grotius’ first attempt ever, indeed the opening move in this long game of chess, to tackle the intrinsic shortcomings of the Dutch experiment. From that perspective, the relevance of De Republica Emendanda, however immature its presentation both intellectually and stylistically, and for all its flaws by comparison with Grotius’ majestic works written at a more advanced age, can never be seriously questioned.

13 In the final paragraphs of his Politica.
14 The reference is to Grotius’ Inleiding tot de Hollandsche Rechts-geleerthyd (Introduction to the Dutch Jurisprudence) (The Hague, 1631).
‘De Republica Emendanda’: Identification of Authorship

In many respects, the tract here under consideration is a *Fremdkörper* in the Grotian canon.\(^{15}\) So much so indeed that its authenticity has long been questioned on solid grounds. It reached us in a single manuscript copy, hidden in an omnibus codex in Vienna\(^{16}\) stemming from a Venetian diplomat and collector,\(^{17}\) and was identified as a result of a chance discovery by a prominent Dutch law professor back in 1964.\(^{18}\) The manuscript is unmistakably a copy, its handwriting very unlike Grotius’ scribblings or the known hands of any of his private secretaries. The author’s name in the heading is added by yet another hand that likewise baffles verification. Apart from this, the tract abounds with misspellings of biblical proper names and syntactical irregularities that put into question the expertise of the transcriber. Moreover, its contents are sometimes at variance with the tenets maintained by Grotius on other occasions, such as in *De antiquitate* (*On the Ancients*, 1610), *Apologeticus* (*Defense*, 1622), and *De jure belli ac pacis* (*On the Laws of War and Peace*, 1625).\(^{19}\)

Whereas, consequently, circumspection and caution were imperative, a clean dismissal of Grotius’ authorship was forborne by the sheer topicality of the issue throughout his life. Also, in the tract, its author clearly presents himself as a Dutchman and alludes to social and political circumstances which fit in wondrously with Grotius’ early Dutch years. In 1983 identification was much enhanced by the establishment of a cursory reference in a letter from one of Grotius’ sons to his father and dated 1638, to the purport of his having perchance stumbled across a manuscript: “*inveni ibi librum tuum De emendanda Republica tua manu descriptum*” (“I found there your book *On How to Emend the Dutch Polity*, written in your


\(^{16}\) See *Tabulae codicum manu scriptorum praeter graecos et orientales in Bibliotheca Palatina Vindobonensi*, Band 4 (1870), cod. 6256, pp. 288–289.

\(^{17}\) Marco Foscarini (1695–1763), a Venetian doge, diplomat, and historiographer.


\(^{19}\) On these issues, see Eyffinger, “Grotius on the Dutch Polity,” pp. 8–10; Besselink, “The Place of *De Republica Emendanda*.”
own hand”). In the provisional 1984 edition of the tract, the watermark evidence of the Viennese copy was elaborated upon to help sustain identification of the manuscript with Grotius’ immediate surroundings. Also, on that occasion, the eventualities which led to the manuscript ending up in the hands of the Venetian collector were amply discussed. By all appearances, a former pupil and private secretary of Grotius, Dirck Graswinckel, himself the author of Libertas Veneta (Venetian Freedom), a tract on the Venetian commonwealth and constitution, was instrumental in the process through his many contacts with Venetian diplomats. The manuscript’s recipient, incidentally, Count Marco Foscarini, himself authored Ragionamento politico sulla perfezione della Repubblica (Political Reasoning on the Perfection of the Republic).

The Dating of the Tract

While the above strongly suggested Grotius’ authorship, it left the pinpointing of the date and the tract’s insertion into Grotius’ intellectual development and political thought still very much an open question. Suffice it to say here that the sum of positive and negative internal evidence—more specifically, the absence of references to either acute religious troubles, the political watershed of 1618, or even the Twelve-Year Truce with Spain, which was concluded in 1609—helped trace the drafting of the document to the opening years of the seventeenth century at the latest. This in itself much enhanced the probability of Grotius’ authorship, as the work’s intellectual status would rule out any later dating within his career. In fact, if the manuscript is indeed to be attributed to Grotius, the very tenor of the tract would strongly suggest its dating prior to Prince Maurice’s epochal victory over the Spanish tercios at Nieuwpoort in Flanders (1600), as its atmosphere seems curiously at

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22 Ibid., pp. 13–16.
23 Dirck Graswinckel (1600–1666), a lawyer from Delft who served at the bar in The Hague and Malines, was a prolific author on issues of constitutional law and notably relating to the Venetian republic. His Libertas Veneta sive Venetorum in se ac suos imperandi ius was first published in Leiden in 1634.
25 Ibid., pp. 52–56.
odds with the jubilation breathing from whatever Grotius produced in the years immediately following this major feat of arms.

This in itself is an intriguing observation inasmuch as the years 1598–1600 coincide wondrously with Grotius’ first established pursuits in the field of constitutional comparative law and the growing topicality of the issues to Dutch political circumstance. By virtue of Maurice’s successful campaigns and the first exploits overseas, the Dutch, after some twenty-five years of bitter, uphill fighting, had finally managed to somewhat shift the balance toward the offensive. They were now confidently looking forward to triumphantly crowning three cumbersome decades by establishing a sovereign nation of their own, albeit one based on a truncated body of seven provinces out of the seventeen that had revolted back in 1568. Ever since the recapture of Brussels and Antwerp by Parma in 1585, the Southern Provinces, by all appearances, had been lost for good. Before analyzing the tract here under consideration, we will now briefly sketch the sociopolitical circumstance by which it was prompted and young Grotius’ position at the time.

**The Rise of the Dutch Republic**

The political experiment of the Confederacy that constituted the Dutch Republic stands out as a *rara avis* amidst the absolutism on the rise throughout Europe at the time. The centralizing of power seemed the virtually inevitable answer to the chaos of the previous century; to that extent at least most commentators throughout Europe, whatever their origin and perspective, readily agreed.26 Prominent humanists such as Melanchthon, Budé, and the then-Leiden scholar Justus Lipsius, in his influential *Politica* of 1589, essentially coincided with these views.

However, in 1585, when the urgency of the debate dawned on the Dutch, political observers in the Netherlands concluded on a different course. This was not primarily the outcome of in-depth theoretical speculation, for which, initially at least, the intellectual cadre was far too meager, but rather on the urge of circumstance. If the Dutch revolted against their Hapsburg overlord, it was precisely because, in their opinion, Philip II had alienated himself from his legitimate role, overstepped his invested rights, and usurped what made up the inalienable tenure of the *Staten*, the sovereignty of the provinces. It was Hugo Grotius himself who, in his celebrated *De antiquitate* of 1610, probably best transmitted

26 From Machiavelli, Guicciardini, Paruta, and Botero in Italy; along with Ferrault, Gousté, De Grassaille, Le Roy, Hurrault, and Bodin in France; to Elyot, Gardiner, Merbury, Barclay, and Hobbes in Britain.
this message to the outside world, indeed in unequivocal, be they highly controversial terms.\textsuperscript{27} The flip side of this medal was of course that to many Dutch observers a constitutional monarchy was never a preferred option. Indeed, the full history of the Dutch Republic (1588–1795) can be encapsulated as an intellectual dilemma and political struggle to safeguard unity and secure an effective administration without relapsing into monarchical rule.

In the complex political debate of the first half century of the Dutch Revolt a few crucial periods can be identified: The first immediately following the disastrous Leicestrian interlude (1585–1587), the second during the years leading up to the Twelve-Year Truce (1609–1621), and the third spanning the years from the 1618 crisis up to the end of the truce in 1621. Both the core thought and all durable problems intrinsic to the Republic over the next two centuries surfaced during these periods.

The tracts of the first period, consisting mostly of anonymous pamphlets, appeared in the aftermath of Leicester’s rule and with ensuing resistance to any longer investing a foreign overlord with sovereignty. Understandably, the authors of these pamphlets readily shared an uncompromising stance on provincial sovereignty. The pamphlets led up to the \textit{Korte verthooninghe} of 1587, a first substantial treatise by a Gouda pensionary, François Vranck, which advocated a form of aristocracy mixed with democracy that respected the privileges and obliged the interests of both the landed gentry and the city regents, this last category being recruited from the bourgeois and merchant classes.\textsuperscript{28}

All this is not to say that the pro-monarchist argument was entirely absent from the debate.\textsuperscript{29} In fact, shortly before 1584, there were numerous calls to invest the popular William of Orange with sovereignty. After the latter’s assassination, his son, Prince Maurice, was another ready candidate. However, with the years, and spurred on by the dominant province of Holland and its influential Landsadvocaat, Johan van Oldenbarnevelt, the preference for an aristocratic form of government within a true republic, a so-called aristocratic republicanism, prevailed.

By the same token, in their day-to-day lives, the Dutch were, from very early on, faced with the somewhat embarrassing flip sides of provincial

\textsuperscript{27} Grotius’ \textit{De antiquitate} constitutes one of the pivotal tracts in the debate on Dutch sovereignty. Critical edition by Jan Waszink, Bibliotheca Latinitatis Novae 1 (Assen: Van Gorcum, 2000).

\textsuperscript{28} Eyffinger, “Grotius on the Dutch Polity,” p. 41.

\textsuperscript{29} Thus, Thomas Wilkes’ remonstrance in his debate with Vranck. On this see P.A.M. Geurts, \textit{De Nederlandse Opstand in pamfletten}, 1566–1584 (Utrecht: HES Uitgevers, 1983).
sovereignty—overall particularism, regional friction, and the pettiness and eigensouckelijkheid of city magistrates. The seven provinces, thrown together in their outcry over the alleged abuse of power by the Hapsburg king, soon found out that, apart from sharing a common enemy, there was nothing much to bind them. In fact, in political terms, conflicts were lurking around every corner. Traditions and insights varied enormously, whether social stratification, religious denomination, or commercial interests were considered. In short, numerous were the stumbling blocks precluding the provinces from growing into a veritable union and confederacy.

It is this circumstance that, quite naturally, prompted commentaries such as the one here under consideration for the improvement, or rather implementation, of a true republic.30 By and large, these commentaries can be divided into three classes: Theoretical expositions on the best form of government, such as Paulus Buys’ De Republica (1613) and Paulus Merula’s Commentariolus de statu Confederatorum Belgii (1618); reprints or translations of foreign authors, such as Johannes Meursius’ critical edition of Constantinus Porphyrogenetes’ De Administrando Ingenio of 1611 or editions of Althusius’ pivotal Politica in 1602, 1610, and 1614; and finally, descriptions of foreign constitutions, which we will discuss later.

Meanwhile, for all their efforts, the influence of these authors was never decisive enough to heal the wound. It was only on the strength of this circumstance that an essentially theological conflict such as the one which kept two professors at Leiden University, the bulwark of Calvinist orthodoxy, divided could surface as social strife and from there flare up to political crisis. Indeed, nothing much was required to unbalance the Republic’s fragile equilibrium. In a way, the crisis of 1618 was the virtually inevitable outcome of a long process of fermentation, fostered as much by the innate zealousness of ministers or the inveterate rivalry of city councils as it was spurred by the conflicting ambitions of the strong-headed Landsadvocaat Oldenbarnevelt and proud Prince Maurice of Orange.31 Inasmuch as the first contestant represented the enlightened regents and merchant class of the dominant province of Holland, with time the other quite naturally came to pose as the self-imposed champion of the States General and the common man.

At a fairly early phase, young Grotius, who had migrated from Leiden to The Hague by 1600, there to become an attorney at the bar and a

private counselor to Oldenbarnevelt himself, was keenly aware of his nation’s precarious position. This can be documented with reference to public memorials from around the second period of 1607, the opening months of the protracted negotiations which would result in the Twelve-Year Truce of 1609.32 There is every reason to suggest their endorsement by Grotius, if not to actually ascribe their authorship to him, inasmuch as their tenets are in line with his private correspondence.33

The United Netherlands, it is argued here, is not really a republic but actually seven separate provinces, which among themselves have nothing in common but a military defensive alliance, a contract that is otherwise respected only too lukewarmly. During long decades of war, it is asserted, nothing anywhere aspiring to a common administration or a steady republic had ever materialized, apart from a kind of provisional arrangement as if sede vacante or durante interregno. And even this in itself precarious, if not downright dangerous, arrangement was only upheld precisely on account of the imminent peril of foreign invasion. Any overtures to peace that abated the urgency of this threat would render the fabric torn. Peace would rend asunder, from sheer jealousy and slackness, whatever unity had prevailed so far; indeed, it would prompt the very anarchy and confusion that had induced the Spanish to make their peace proposals in the first place. In short, as the ready conclusion read, a central administration had to be installed, to be recruited from the regent class and profiting from its civic virtues. It was to be vested with full authority to govern the lands without prior consultation of the unifying elements, and rally provinces and city magistrates, perforce if need be—or else the so-called republic would be lost.

It was Grotius’ intimate Johannes Meursius, tutor to the sons of Oldenbarnevelt himself, who, with hindsight, would formulate this ideal in his Areopagus of 1624. Still, as early as 1595, the visionary Justus Lipsius, in a private sendtbrief, had ruefully advised the Spanish king to conclude a sendtbrief truce with the Dutch, arguing that their republic was internally divided to

33 See, for example, Briefwisseling van Hugo Grotius 1, ed. P.C. Molhuysen (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1928), p. 85, no. 100, letter dated April 21, 1607, that is, from the months of peace negotiations, in which Grotius argues: “Nam hactenus, ut verum fateamur, interregnum est, et dilapsuris sponte sua partibus ferruminis usum praebuit metus communis, quo remittente fit locus privatis studis, quae in tam populari imperio facile ad discordias et factiones abeunt.” (“For to be honest, thus far we have had an interregnum, and only the general state of tension has served to cement together elements that are on the verge of flying apart of their own accord; once this tension has relaxed, individuals will have the opportunity to pursue their own agendas, which—in a government so under the control of the people—will quickly lead to strife and political faction.”)
the bone and unity about to collapse. If himself victimized by the jealousy and intolerance at Leiden, Lipsius had by then once more found refuge in Louvain and the Catholic faith.

If the above-mentioned memorials would lead us to conclude that by 1607 Hugo Grotius, for his part, had become a steadfast opponent to the peace Oldenbarnevelt championed, it must be said that ever after 1604 the Landsadvocaat was in a tight spot. His once staunch allies, France and Britain, had both reached peace with Spain in 1598 and 1604, respectively. In the military sphere, the clash between Prince Maurice and Count Spinola had ended in a perfect deadlock. Facing an empty war chest, an imminent failure of the VOC, and a French king only too keen to expand his protectorate, Oldenbarnevelt must have felt caught between a rock and a hard place.

In the overtures to peace, Dutch aspirations of unrestricted sovereignty were crushed by the Spanish demand that the Dutch forthwith abandon their profitable overseas trade. A diplomatic stalemate presented itself, which was then wound off in a truce that would soon make Grotius’ worst fears come true. In September 1609, he intimated to the French diplomat Jeannin, a friend of his, that a recent visit to the province of Zealand had perfectly disillusioned him. If the consensus among the other provinces was mediocre at best, quarrels with Zealand were endless. Also, the incessant internal strife among Zealand’s various cities and factions—whom he deemed as imprudent as they were impudent—undermined, indeed ridiculed, the authority of the States General and any concept of common justice, with the predictable outcome: quae quo tendant facilis est coniectura (it is easy to guess where they are headed). It is interesting to see the considerable extent to which these views coincide with the apprehensions first expressed in De Republica Emendanda.

The crisis, in short, came as no surprise, and the conclusions to be drawn from the experience with Oldenbarnevelt’s aristocratic republic were neatly summarized in 1621 by the Zealand pensionary Johannes de Brune in his Grond-steenen van een vaste regieringe (Foundations of a Firm Government), a steadfast plea for a mixed form of government with the duplex ordo of piety and justice as cornerstones of the

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35 Briefwisseling 1, p. 149, no. 170, letter dated September 18, 1609.
Republic, and an appeal for the abolition of the previous tolerance, which had merely prompted license.\textsuperscript{36} Sovereignty without popular support, it was argued here, only invited the craving for self-interest and power of the \textit{raison d'état}, while religious issues were discussed in the marketplace only at the risk of civil strife. After a long quest which had ended in crisis, the republicanism that represented the optimism of the early decades of the Dutch Revolt was to be supplanted by a mixed constitution. We will now turn to the role of state parallels in the process sketched above.

\textbf{Political Parallels}

Within the Dutch debate, among the political models that were hailed as exemplary or worthy of imitation, one must distinguish between contemporary and historical parallels.\textsuperscript{37} Prominent within the first category was the model of the Swiss Confederacy, a genre represented by Simler's \textit{De Republycke van Switserlandt} (\textit{Republic of Switzerland}) of 1613 and François le Petit's \textit{Nederlandsche Republycke... vergeleken met die van de Swytsersche cantoenen} (\textit{Dutch Republic Compared with the Swiss Cantons}) of 1615. Tracts on the Venetian constitution are in a distinct class of their own. These too have a long pedigree in the Dutch Republic, which amounts to what has been coined as “The Venetian Myth.”\textsuperscript{38} Admittedly, most of these tracts date from a slightly later period, opening with a 1628 Leiden edition of Contarini's \textit{De Republica Venetorum} (\textit{On the Republic of the Venetians}). This is followed in 1631 by the edition of Giannotti's \textit{Dialogi}, which was rendered into Dutch in 1667; followed by Graswinckel's \textit{Libertas Veneta} of 1634; Thysius' panegyric on Venice of 1645; translations of Nanni's historiography in 1685–1700; and finally, Van Hoogstraten's monograph on Venice of 1715.

If this sequence attests to the lasting topicality of the issues to the Dutch intellectual debate, still, the keen interest of the Dutch, indeed of Hugo Grotius himself, in the Venetian model is documented well before 1628. Among Grotius' earliest works is his 1599 translation of a tract on piloting, by a lifelong friend of his, Simon Stevin of Bruges, Maurice's tried and trusted engineer, who incidentally authored \textit{Vita Politica} (\textit{Political

\textsuperscript{36} See Blom, “Politieke theorieën,” pp. 146–149.

\textsuperscript{37} For an overview of these issues in the wider European context, see Martin van Gelderen and Quentin Skinner, eds., \textit{Republicanism: A Shared European Heritage} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

Life) in 1590. Grotius’ dedication of this Limenheuretike (Finding a Harbor), or Havenvinding, of 1599 is addressed to the Venetian doge. Again, the following year, when publishing his astronomical treatise Syntagma Arateorum (Collection of Aratus’ Works), otherwise an astounding philological achievement, Grotius once more addressed his dedication to the doge in a vast eulogy of Venice and a lengthy comparison of the mercantile aspirations and aristocratic constitutions of both republics.

If the above attests somewhat to Grotius’ acute interest in state parallels already by 1600, he would soon provide further testimony. This leads us to consider the second category of state models, being the historical parallels. During 1600–1602 Grotius had completed ample research for a comprehensive comparison of Dutch society with the ancient Greek and Roman commonwealths in three books entitled Parallelon rerumpublicarum, of which only a single book has come down to us. We will elaborate on this later; for now this suffices to establish Grotius’ keen interest in not only contemporary but also ancient constitutions. The relevance of this observation becomes manifest once we turn to discuss another great tradition in Holland, the mirroring of the Dutch with the ancient Hebrew confederation.

In the period under consideration, both political observers and religious leaders in Holland were positively inspired by what they saw as a wondrous resemblance of the vicissitudes of the tribes of Israel and the Dutch Republic. Both nations, the Hebrew and the Dutch, had won their independence and regained the true faith by trial. The idea is suitably epitomized by the prince of Dutch poets, Joost van den Vondel, in the line cited in the title of this paper. Clearly, this parallel was gratefully acknowledged by politicians to underscore the righteousness of their cause and the privileged status of the Dutch as God’s chosen

40 Ibid., pp. 46–47, 132–133.
41 Ibid., pp. 47–48, 133–135.
42 On these matters, see Arthur Eyffinger, ed., The Poetry of Hugo Grotius, vol. 2, 1.3 (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1988), pp. 45–50; the same can also be found in Grotiana, n.s. vol 2 (1981), p. 116ff. This and further citations of The Poetry of Hugo Grotius in this essay are from the multiple-volume De Dichtwerken van Hugo Grotius (The Poetry of Hugo Grotius) (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1970–).
people, as much as it was by clergymen with a view to imposing the most stringent orthodoxy, indeed to the point of aspiring to turn the Republic into a theocracy. Biblical references, imagery, and similitudes became ubiquitous in Dutch society, as attested to by the works that emerged from the worlds of scholarship, literature, and the visual arts alike.

Among the earliest political tracts in the field is *De observatione politiae Moysis* (On the Preservation of the State of Moses) of 1593 by no less a figure than Franciscus Junius, author of *Grammatica linguae Hebraeae* (Grammar of the Hebrew Language) of 1590 and, more important for our purposes, prominent among Grotius’ early teachers. Junius was the man with whom the young genius found lodgings during his student years and who, in Grotius’ own words, was decisive in instilling an essentially irenic imprint on him for the remainder of his life. 44 Again, in 1608, Sigonius’ *De Republica Hebraeorum* was reprinted in the Netherlands, followed in 1617 by the epitome of the tradition there, Petrus Cunaeus’ authoritative treatise, which bore the same title as Sigonius’ and incorporated all the lore accumulated by him, Pagninus, and Bertram or, for that matter, by Frictius Modrevius of Poland. 45

Now to return briefly to Junius. According to both Cunaeus and Scaliger, Franciscus Junius, for all his renown, was not much of an authority on Hebrew studies. For expertise in that field they much preferred another scholar, far less widely known, Johan Boreel, a politician and pensionary from Zealand who wrote a learned commentary on the book of Daniel, was an expert in Oriental languages, had traveled extensively in the Middle East, and, along the way, had amassed an extremely valuable collection of manuscripts and Orientalia, which mostly ended up in Cambridge University Library. Boreel was also an intimate of Hugo Grotius. 46 Actually, it was Boreel who first interviewed the Alexandrian patriarch Meletius Pegas, who lent his name to Grotius’ well-known “open letter” to Boreel of 1611, entitled *Meletius*, in which Grotius first developed his essentially irenic thesis. This is the same Boreel who was given credit by Cunaeus for having introduced him to the works of

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44 Among the works of François Dujon (F. Junius; 1545–1602) dating from Grotius’ student days are *Le paisible Chrétien* and *Eirenicum*, both published in Leiden in 1593. See Eyffinger, “Grotius on the Dutch Polity,” pp. 29.


46 As witnessed by Grotius’ correspondence and poetry over his early years. Grotius composed an epithalamium for Boreel’s wedding in 1608.
Maimonides, Sigonius, and all the others and who probably inspired him to conceive his *De Republica Hebraeorum* in the first place.

Meanwhile, throughout the period here under consideration, Hebrew and Oriental studies flourished at Leiden, and young Grotius was on intimate terms with all of the most prominent figures: Scaliger himself, first and foremost; but likewise the longstanding professor of Hebrew Franciscus Raphelengius, who taught him some elementary Arabic in 1605; or for that matter Thomas Erpenius, who was of particular assistance during Grotius’ years of imprisonment and in a way was instrumental in his spectacular escape.47 Again, in the north of the country, at Franeker, another former Leiden professor of international standing, Joannes Drusius, spearheaded a booming center of Oriental studies. Drusius’ courses were attended by Cunaeus.

And this brings us to Cunaeus. He and Grotius were on fairly intimate terms throughout. Grotius was involved with the genesis of Cunaeus’ *De Republica Hebraeorum*, which was ready by 1614, as much as Cunaeus was involved with Grotius’ many tracts in the years 1610–1618, which dealt with all the vexed and intertwined issues of the day, ranging from predestination and the Lord’s grace to appointments at Leiden University, matters of church and state, and irenicism. Prior to their publication, drafts of all these tracts were sent to Cunaeus for review.48 A professor of Latin at Leiden from 1612 onward, added to by a tenure in politics soon afterward, Cunaeus with time felt ever more attracted to the study of law. A restless and brilliant mind, he seems to have been a courageous enough character as well. Amid the growing tension at Leiden in 1613, he ventured to publish a satire, *Sardi Venales* (*Fools for Sale*), in which he ridiculed pedant university dons and dismissed the Remonstrant troubles as the plaything of arrogant theologians and perfectly ignorant clergy-men. The pamphlet caused student riots and the canceling of courses for weeks on end—apparently without at all damaging Cunaeus’ reputation in official circles. Having completed his legal thesis in 1615 and following a brief interval at the Hague court, Cunaeus soon returned to his alma

47 A sister of Erpenius was married to a merchant in Gorcum, near Loevestein Castle. The latter volunteered a book chest to facilitate the regular transport of books from Erpenius in Leiden to Loevestein, so as to support the prisoner’s biblical research. It was with the help of this book chest that, two years later, Grotius made his escape.

48 This holds true for Meletius, which was written in 1611 but suppressed; *Ordinum Pietas* (1613), which can be found in a critical edition with English translation and commentary by Edwin Rabbie, to be found in *Hugo Grotius, Ordinum Hollandiae ac Westfrisiae Pietas*, 1613 (Leiden: Brill, 1995); *De Satisfacione Christi* (1617), which can be found in Edwin Rabbie, ed., *Defensio fidei catholicae De satisfactione Christi adversus Faustum Socinum Senensem* (A Defense of the Catholic Faith concerning the Satisfaction
mater to be entrusted with the teaching of courses on Justinian’s *Digests* and later on the *Pandects* and *Codex*.

In his varying capacities as a first-rate linguist and Hebraist, a prominent literator, and a student of both law and politics, Cunaeus may justly be called the Dutch counterpart of John Selden in Britain. The interesting thing is that the two foremost Dutch and British protagonists of the Hebrew confederacy were to cross swords over quite a different issue, and this leads us back to Grotius. At some stage, Selden was commissioned by his government to formally counter Hugo Grotius’ *Mare Liberum*, the Dutchman’s pivotal tract from 1609 on the freedom of the seas. In 1635, Selden, to that end, published his *Mare Clausum* (*A Closed Sea*). The following year, with Grotius himself in exile in Paris, it was Petrus Cunaeus who was commissioned by the States of Holland, in his capacity as counsel on matters of commerce and trade, to pass judgment on Selden’s thesis.

**THE CONTEXT OF ‘DE REPUBLICA EMENDANDA’**

The above has served to establish Grotius’ keen and lasting interest in all three elements which together must have brought about the tract here under consideration: an acute political awareness, an inclination to state parallels, and some familiarity with the ongoing debate on the relevance of the Hebrew confederacy to contemporary commonwealths. We will now see what expertise Grotius could have mustered by about 1600, the most likely date of origin of the tract.

By 1598, at the age of fifteen, the precocious youngster’s mostly philological pursuits over the preceding four years at Leiden University were cut short by his attendance of Oldenbarnevelt’s diplomatic mission to Fontainebleau in a futile attempt on the part of the Dutch administration to preclude the Peace of Vervins between France and Spain. Grotius eminently availed himself of the trip abroad to earn a doctorate of law at Orléans. Upon his return he published two astrological tracts, produced a wealth of liminary poetry that glorified the feats of arms of Prince Maurice,49 and intriguingly commented in verse on the political

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barometer of Europe. By December 1599, Grotius had definitely turned to The Hague and to practicing law.

In 1601 the first of Grotius’ three biblical tragedies along Senecan lines, *Adamus exul (Adam in Exile)*, saw light. In an epilogue to this publication, *Lectori (To the Reader)*, which incidentally contained a wealth of poetical paraphrases of texts from both Testaments, the young genius proudly refers to his “work in progress.” Of all the titles advertised here, nothing ever materialized in printed form, due precisely to the subsequent spectacular rise of his professional career—already by 1604 he had been officially appointed state historiographer. The following year saw him at work on behalf of the VOC in defense of the capture of a Portuguese *caraque*. From this emanated *De jure praedae (On the Laws of Booty)* and eventually the celebrated *Mare Liberum*.

Meanwhile, the drafts referred to in the epilogue to *Adamus exul* are not without interest in our context. Reference is made to a dialogue entitled *Philarchaeus (The Lover of Antiquities)*, which was lost altogether, but in which, according to its author, Moses’ sacred history was confirmed by numerous pagan testimonies—“that is, if one may say so of something which is inherently certain and is not in want of external support to lend credibility to it.” In this dialogue, numerous data on Egyptian, Phoenician, Orphic, and Pythagorean theology were amassed. In other words, in the period here under consideration, Grotius was well steeped in Mosaic law. This is also testified to by the proficiency in Mosaic law he displayed in *Adamus exul*, his tragedy on “paradise lost,” which served as a model for Milton’s epic.

Are these projects and his network of Orientalists to suggest a solid command of Oriental languages, particularly of Hebrew, on Grotius’ part? Commentators have widely disagreed on this. At the end of the day it

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50 The reference is to *Pontifex Romanus*, from the days of the Triple Alliance, in Meulenbroek, *Poetry of Hugo Grotius*, vol. 2.1, p. 73ff.
52 Ibid., p. 294ff.
54 *Adamus exul*, p. 295.
55 For a survey of the *quaestio*, see Edwin Rabbie, “Grotius and Judaism,” in Edwin Rabbie and Henk J.M. Nellen, eds., *Hugo Grotius Theologian: Essays in Honor of G.H.M. Posthumus Meyjes* (Leiden: Brill, 1994), pp. 99–120. So much for certain, from the 1630s onward, also thanks to the publications and personal advice of such scholars as Cocceius, Schickard, De Voisin, and L’Empereur, Grotius’ intimate knowledge of rabbinical literature, ranging from early medieval sources, along with Maimonides,
would seem that his knowledge of rabbinical literature was rudimentary and his command of postbiblical Hebrew slight at best. So much for certain, the *sine qua non* at the time for the intimate reading of the Talmud, namely a Jewish teacher, is not documented in Grotius’ case, unlike in the cases of Scaliger, Drusius, and Erpenius. It would seem that whatever knowledge of Hebrew young Grotius had mastered was based on the teachings of Junius, himself a pupil of Tremellius, along with snatches gained from his intimacy with Scaliger. One should recall and appreciate that it was quite probably Scaliger himself who steered Grotius’ early projects. If Grotius’ courses in Arabic with Raphelengius as late as 1605 suggest a sincere scholarly interest, by the same token, the singular increase of references to and quotes from Judaic sources in Grotius’ works from the last decade of his life coincides with the increasing availability of Latin translations. To conclude, it would seem that Grotius’ eagerness, throughout his life, to have a network of specialized contacts ready at hand was precisely meant to succor his own rudimentary knowledge whenever this seemed opportune.

Now, to return to *Adamus exul*, in its above-mentioned epilogue another intriguing reference is found to his ongoing work on “nostratis reipublicae cum aliis olim nobilibus, successuumque inter se comparatio” (“comparison of our own state with the great states of the past, and of their respective successes”), in short, historical state parallels. This reference has always been interpreted as referring to the above-mentioned *Parallelon rerumpublicarum*; the draft of the preserved part of this project was clearly finished by the summer of 1602, and from there the manuscript circulated among Grotius’ friends until the project was abandoned altogether by 1606.

Now there can be no doubt that *De Republica Emendanda* and *Parallelon rerumpublicarum* are works of essentially different natures. The most conspicuous aspect of the latter tract is its endless eulogy of the unity of the seven provinces, to the point where the author begs the question. If anything, whether or not against his better judgment, this to his contemporary Menasseh ben Israel, grew considerably. Cf. also Manfred Lachs, “Hugo Grotius’ Use of Jewish Sources in *On the Laws of War and Peace*,” Renaissance Quarterly 30 (1977), pp. 181–200; A.W. Rosenberg, “Hugo Grotius as Hebraist,” Studia Rosenthaliana 12 (1978), pp. 62–90. All in all, it is remarkable that no intimate links and personal relationships between Grotius and representatives of the Jewish community, either in Holland or abroad, can be attested to.

56 *Adamus exul*, p. 297.

57 See Eyffinger’s contribution to Nellen and Trapman, *De Hollandse Jaren* (note 10 above), pp. 92–93.
approach was brought on by Grotius' wishful thinking. Be that as it may, the tract definitely attests to his keen eye for the acuteness of the situation and the relevance of this genre of writing. Primarily meant for the general public, Parallelon, one may conclude, was intended as an admonition to his compatriots not to fall into the same traps that had brought down the Greek and Roman commonwealths. Now, this jubilant tone is singularly absent from Grotius’ comparison between the Dutch and Hebrew constitutions, which, if anything, shows the author’s sincere concern with the mesalliance of the seven provinces. This in itself may suggest that De Republica Emendanda was meant for private circulation and internal debate. Meanwhile, Grotius’ reference in the 1601 epilogue to Adamus exul, if deemed to definitely allude to his Parallelon, should not as a consequence be precluded from referring also to his De Republica Emendanda.

The Contents of the Tract

The text of De Republica Emendanda consists of sixty-four paragraphs that fall into three well-distinguished segments:

First, a comparison of the Hebrew and Dutch constitutions in most general terms (pars. 1–27), including:

(i) A comparison of legislation in the fields of sacred and civil law (pars. 6–13)
(ii) A discussion of the best possible constitution according to political theorists and divine revelation (pars. 14–19)
(iii) An inquiry into the nature of the Hebrew kingship (pars. 20–27).

Second, a full analysis of the Hebrew constitutions (pars. 28–42), covering:

(i) A proposition of method and a working definition of the true republic (pars. 28–29)
(ii) A structural examination of the Hebrew commonwealth at the levels of township, tribe, and nation (pars. 30–32)
(iii) A structural examination of the major bodies operative at each level: the principal, council, and assembly (pars. 33–34)
(iv) The council as supreme authoritative body at each level, and the conclusion as to the role of this council as the sovereign body within the unity of twelve tribes (pars. 35–42).

Last, a discussion of the form of government operative in the republic (pars. 43–64), consisting of:

(i) A historical synopsis of the genesis of the republic (pars. 43–49)
(ii) Its shortcomings at each level (pars. 50–58)
(iii) Recommendations for emendation: the centralization of power and the sovereignty of the council (pars. 59–64).

The tract abounds with references to suggest that, whether based on original research or not, Grotius’ command of biblical and historical sources was impressive. There is nothing surprising here. Grotius pursued biblical studies throughout his life. His bulky Annotones, the harvest of a lifetime of painstaking research, are an acknowledged source of exegesis in the Netherlands and exemplary in their philological approach.58

Having said this, and in all fairness to the author, De Republica Emendanda, in spite of all the humanist lore, philosophical niceties, and historical parallels, is, first and foremost, a very practical proposal for the emendation of the Dutch Republic, and we should never be fooled about its ultimate purport. If, rather than drawing parallels with contemporary polities, Grotius harks back to the Hebrew commonwealth, he had very good reasons to do so. First, he paid lip service to the widely felt affinity in Calvinist Holland toward the ancient Hebrew nation and to the popular belief, so readily kindled by the zealot clergy, of a far-reaching similarity between the natures, constitutions, and statuses of the two commonwealths. To this end, Grotius emphasizes the parallels between the salutary history of the Jewish nation up to the Roman domination and the history of the Dutch Revolt.59 This parallel was suggestive of a special kind of divine patronage the Dutch Republic was supposed to enjoy and which only confirmed the truth of Calvinist orthodoxy. In the dedication of Cunaeus’ tract of 1617, a much similar approach can be observed in the reference to the “coniunctio animorumque conspiratio” with the Hebrew nation “qua nulla umquam in terris sanctior, nec bonis exemplis ditior fuit” (“the holiest ever to have existed in the world, and the richest in examples for us to emulate”).60

Still, a more powerful argument is advanced. The current shortcomings of the Dutch polity and its defective political practice only served to emphasize the imperfections of the ratio humana, for all its good intentions. Human political insights must by their very nature be inferior to that superior source of knowledge, divina revelatio, as contained in the laws of Moses. Since the Hebrew nation was the only one to have drawn from this source, its constitution must, by its very nature, be the


59 Grotius, De Republica Emendanda, pars. 6, 13.

60 Cunaeus, in the preface to his De Republica Hebraeorum (1617).
superior one.\textsuperscript{61} Clearly, there was nothing new about this line of reasoning. The argument was advanced and elaborated in full detail by prominent sixteenth-century authors in the field such as Bertram and Sigonius, to whom we have referred above—and Grotius was well aware of the tradition, which he invokes consistently, without otherwise bothering too much over credentials. In his turn, Cunaeus draws from the same source: “*quoniam illa hercle non hominem quemquam mortali concretioni satum, sed ipsum Deum immortalem, autorem fundatoremque habet*” (“because its creator and founder was not some man sprung from mortal matter, but immortal God himself”).\textsuperscript{62}

All this seems nice and innocent enough. From here on, however, Grotius brings down his main argument with full force. In paragraphs 14–17 he presents a survey of human reasoning throughout the ages with respect to the three main constitutional concepts: Monarchy, aristocracy, and democracy. His conclusions are as one would expect: Grotius’ outspoken preference for the optimates, that is, the aristocratic form of government, is well known from many sources, as, for that matter, is his abomination of tyranny and his abhorrence of the vulgus. In this context it is opportune to point out the importance of Grotius’ biblical dramas as a vehicle for his political tenets. Sixteenth- and seventeenth-century drama all over Europe was eminently politicized. These were pièces à clé, pièces à thèse mostly. Grotius’ three plays—on *Adamus exul* (Adam in Exile, 1601), *Christus patiens* (The Passion of Christ, 1608), and *Sophompaneas* (Joseph in Egypt, 1635)—for all intents and purposes, comment on acute topical issues, echoing the author’s personal tenets under the veil of biblical circumstance. We will have occasion to illustrate this below. To return to the tract here under consideration, in spite of a wealth of treatises to the contrary and contemporary practice all around, Grotius readily argues:

Some support the idea of monarchy as being the reflection of this supreme power which so intelligently rules the universe. Some insist on investing the people with autonomy and assert that nature itself strongly suggests that all men are equal. But then there are men to whom neither the rule of a single man nor that of all men together is pleasing, and they maintain that it is inherent in human destiny that the best way always turns out to lie in the middle. Most sensible indeed are they who insist on a certain combination of these,

\textsuperscript{61} Grotius, *De Republica Emendanda*, pars. 1–3.

\textsuperscript{62} Cunaeus, *De Republica Hebraeorum*, preface.
in the sense that a single state embraces the majesty of a prince, the
authority of a senate, and the freedom of a people.\textsuperscript{63}

He then concludes:

Also, it should be stipulated that the same things do not equally
befit all people. However, an aristocratic government seems to suit
the nation best which loves its freedom as much as it shows re-
spect to virtue; and experience teaches us that whenever a nation
shakes off the yoke of tyranny, this is the most likely alternative to
replace it.\textsuperscript{64}

The Hebrew King

Grotius then turns to the core of his argument, the form of constitu-
tion which “God himself selected for his chosen people.” Drawing from
Josephus,\textsuperscript{65} he argues that both Samuel and Moses readily agreed on ar-
istocracy. He cites Moses as having said:

\[\text{The best thing is aristocracy and the way of life that is associated}
\text{with it. May the longing for another civil regime never creep upon}
\text{you, but rather cherish this kind of constitution, respect the author-
\text{ity of my laws, and live up to them. For God is the only supreme}
\text{emperor you need.}}\textsuperscript{66}\]

In similar tenor God, through Moses, explicitly disapproved of
democracy\textsuperscript{67} and of monarchy, as Grotius argues with reference to
Samuel\textsuperscript{68} and Gideon.\textsuperscript{69} However, one way or the other, Grotius could not
possibly dismiss forthwith the unequivocal references in Deuteronomy
in which God actually recommended a king to the Israelites once they
had taken possession of the promised land,\textsuperscript{70} or the references in Judges
to the license of the mob due precisely to the absence of a king.\textsuperscript{71} This

\textsuperscript{63} Grotius, \textit{De Republica Emendanda}, par. 14.
\textsuperscript{64} Ibid., par. 16.
\textsuperscript{65} Flavius Josephus, \textit{Jewish Antiquities}, IV, 223; XI, 111; XIV, 91; XX, 251; Josephus,
\textit{Wars of the Jews}, I, 170.
\textsuperscript{66} Grotius, \textit{De Republica Emendanda}, par. 17.
\textsuperscript{67} Deuteronomy 12:8ff.; Exodus 15:24, 16:2, 17:2; Numbers 11:1, 14:1, 16:1; Josephus,
\textit{Jewish Antiquities}, III, 7; IV, 14ff.
\textsuperscript{68} 1 Samuel 8:7, 10:17–19; Josephus, \textit{Jewish Antiquities}, VI, 35ff.
\textsuperscript{69} Judges 8:22–23.
\textsuperscript{71} Judges 17:6, 21:24.
spurred him into a commentary on the nature of this kingship.\textsuperscript{72} Having discussed the absolute nature of Oriental kingdoms\textsuperscript{73} and observed in passing that both Moses and David, in their respective capacities of lawgiver and military commander, were addressed as “king,”\textsuperscript{74} he concludes that there were two categories of monarchy, dependent on the king’s position before the law. With reference to Aristotle and Homer,\textsuperscript{75} he comments on the nature of the so-called kings who ruled among the Spartans, and who, in all respects but their military command alone, acted effectively as \textit{primus inter pares}. Quoting from Josephus, he has Moses himself comment: “Consider God as your supreme commander with plenary powers; but elect as his lieutenant a man of outstanding virtue.”\textsuperscript{76} This “Laconian” kingship, in Grotius’ perception clearly the one recommended by the Lord, he finds documented in the figures of Samuel\textsuperscript{77} and Joshua.\textsuperscript{78} Acting to the contrary was the damnable figure of Abimelech, who seized power, abolished the aristocracy, and proclaimed himself above the law and the judiciary.\textsuperscript{79}

The latter phenomenon was not incidental. In biblical practice, numerous indeed were the kings who freely committed adultery and robbery without ever being called to account in the way the Spartan kings were, for the very reason that their absolute power made them untouchable. The story of Absalom was enlightening in this respect.\textsuperscript{80} However, this ran counter to Jahweh’s intentions, inasmuch as there was no point in concluding a covenant with him in the first place when a king who felt like violating the treaty could not be stopped anyway. As Aristotle, “the first of philosophers,” had wisely observed: “he who confers power upon the law joins forces with God, whereas he who entrusts power to man joins the Beast.”\textsuperscript{81} References to a “king” in the Mosaic tradition, Grotius concludes, may well have implied a kind of collective


\textsuperscript{73} See Jeremiah 50–52 for Babylonian and Chaldaean kings; Daniel 1:21, 13:65 for Medean and Persian kings; Ezekiel 29–30 for Egyptian pharaoh.

\textsuperscript{74} Deuteronomy 33:5; I Samuel 21:12; cf. Josephus, \textit{Jewish Antiquities}, VI, 245.


\textsuperscript{76} Josephus, \textit{Jewish Antiquities}, IV, 297.

\textsuperscript{77} Deuteronomy 17:14–20; I Samuel 8:11–18.

\textsuperscript{78} Exodus 17:9; Josephus, \textit{Jewish Antiquities}, III, 49; Joshua 13–19.

\textsuperscript{79} Judges 9; Josephus, \textit{Jewish Antiquities}, V, 233ff.

\textsuperscript{80} II Samuel 13–19; Josephus, \textit{Jewish Antiquities}, VII, 181ff.

\textsuperscript{81} Aristotle, \textit{Politics} 1287a28ff.
authority, combining political and judicial elements, rather than a single head of state.  

**Historicity**

The above is highlighted as exemplary of Grotius’ kind of reasoning, a method which is upheld throughout the tract and notably in its second major excursion, an extensive description of the Sanhedrin. The role of the Sanhedrin is emphasized by Grotius as much as by any of his predecessors, and again for very pragmatic reasons. The method applied throughout is typical of the eclectic humanist approach, and Grotius would avail himself of the concept time and again, in his *Parallelon rerumpublicarum* and, most conspicuously, in his celebrated *De antiquitate*, in which the time-honored supremacy of the States General is reconstructed from Roman and medieval sources and “proved” beyond dispute.  

Clearly, there is no need for further scrutiny of the historicity of these biblical references. They are selected and arranged to serve a well-defined, preset purport, to mirror the ideal Grotius has set himself for the Dutch Republic. In paragraph 42 he draws his major conclusion, to wit, that “the true Hebrew republic” was not the township or tribe but rather the society made up of the twelve tribes together and in which the senate held supreme power. Twenty-seven paragraphs later, having dealt with the Dutch constitution in much similar terms, he draws the conclusion that the similarities between the Hebrew and Dutch republics are indeed “so many and so striking that you might rightly wonder why we should not reasonably hope that, given such a similar model, we can simply adapt the few remaining points of difference.” These “few remaining points,” however, concern the two major features of the Hebrew constitution, to wit, the primacy of the union and the central role of the Sanhedrin! To be sure, changes should not be implemented overnight, the invariably conservative Grotius argues: “Every nation has its own morals and a nature of its own, and particular institutions corresponding to them.” To copy these “just like that” would lead to a “complete dissimilar duplicate.” Also, and here the Grotius of *De antiquitate* comes to the fore: “if there is

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82 Genesis 36:31ff.


84 Grotius, *De Republica Emendanda*, par. 49.
no obvious advantage in change, then as a rule the change itself causes great inconvenience." 85

**Shortcomings of the Dutch Constitution**

The last fifteen paragraphs of *De Republica Emendanda* are reserved for a survey of shortcomings of the Dutch Republic and specific recommendations for its amendment. The Republic's major defects, it is argued here, concern both the interrelation of the various bodies within its respective communities (townships and provinces) and the attitude of the communities toward each other. In this respect, precious lessons could be drawn from the Hebrew model. In that ancient commonwealth, obviously, the council constituted the highest authority within each community, and the greatest community equaled the true republic. Given this model the current Dutch equivalent fell short in both respects. Within the townships, a proper hierarchy was lacking, in that the citizenry increasingly exerted its influence upon the magistrates, while the latter, in turn, tended to affect the supreme power of the senate and, by party strife and turmoil, jeopardize overall stability.

Likewise, at the provincial level, Grotius considered the states too powerful and the role of the councilors too restricted. Delegates, more often than not, acted primarily in the interest of the township that delegated them and to which they were bound by oath, rather than keeping in mind the overall interest. This circumstance prompted endless disagreement, again at the cost of the public interest. The same could be observed at the highest level, the union of the provinces. Here, councilors who were held under obligation by their provinces actually eroded the authority of the Council of State, the body which should have represented and preserved the highest common interest.

As Grotius concludes in paragraph 55, unlike the Hebrew model, the so-called United Provinces did not constitute a true republic, but merely a confederacy and a kind of alliance in case of war. The best proof thereof was that the leaders of the confederate body lacked the authority to reform provincial laws, and in case of a dispute between provinces there was no constitutional court of justice to which to appeal. In short, every province possessed the full rights of a true republic. This situation, Grotius argues, mirrored that of the Hebrew state between the days of Joshua and Samuel, as recorded in Judges, 86 when each tribe adopted

85 Ibid.

86 Judges 17:6, 21:25.
a policy of its own and waged wars of its own, which resulted in the neglect of the true faith, worship of idols, internal strife, tyranny, and, the greatest of all evils, civil war. Grotius then cites the well-known saying of Tacitus about the Greek city-states of old and the Germans and Britons of his own time: “inasmuch as they fought individually, they were collectively conquered.”

By comparison he praises the Achaean League, which united the whole of the Peloponnese and to that extent could serve as a great model for the Dutch Republic.

**Recommendations**

Grotius then concludes upon a set of very specific recommendations. The central organ of the true Dutch Republic should be the Council (“Senatus”), which should be authorized to enact laws of general purport and decide autonomously on all matters of war, peace, and alliances. This Council should comprise the wisest men from all provinces, though not in their capacity as representatives of these provinces. They should be elected for a life term and the body be replenished through co-optation. In much the same way as with the Hebrew priests, this Council should include pious men with expertise in church administration. Meanwhile, it should be presided over by the highest prefect, who is to act as commander in chief. In a similar vein, Grotius concludes, taxes should be centralized, a single Treasury established, and a united military and a single currency imposed. Grotius then invites others to elaborate on these outlines.

**Grotius’ Position circa 1600 and Subsequent Views**

From the above it can be established that, as early as 1600, young Grotius entertained sincere apprehensions about the consistent discord within and among the townships, provinces, and various classes of the Dutch population and genuine concern with their widely dissenting views on many fundamental issues of general purport. What Grotius claims, in as many words, is that the widely acclaimed “republic” had actually never materialized and should indeed be implemented forthwith. It is a fairly bleak picture he sketches of a society running wild. As stipulated above, the sketch is singularly at odds with the picture drawn some three years later in the *Parallelon rerumpublicarum*. Is this to say that

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87 Tacitus, *Agricola* 12.2.

in between things had dramatically changed for the better? Certainly not. Admittedly, the military victory in Flanders had come as a great relief, but the hazardous expedition, pushed through by Oldenbarnevelt against the better judgment of the much more cautious Prince Maurice, had brought to the surface the widely differing views and personal antagonism between the Republic’s two leading politicians. None of the core issues had changed, and Grotius must have been well aware of this. Clearly, the Parallelon was meant for a different audience, the critical angle for once having been supplanted by an adhortative approach.

Still, one recalls the Memorien mentioned above and dating from approximately 1607. Here a tenor is felt to prevail that is much similar to De Republica Emendanda, with a desperate tinge at that. For this, there was ample reason. By that juncture, the military deadlock resulting from Count Spinola’s counteroffensive against Maurice, along with the financial dire straits of the leading province of Holland, had definitely cornered Oldenbarnevelt. With James I alienated and the French king lying in wait to take over sovereignty, the Dutch by 1608 were left with little choice but to accept the ingeniously alluring terms presented by Madrid and Brussels. At that critical moment, Grotius once more voiced protest, advancing that the worst enemy was actually lurking inside the body politic and that foreign war, whatever its cost, would at all times be preferable to civil strife. In his second biblical drama, Christus patiens of 1608, which at heart is a warm plea for conciliation, he vividly portrays the blind frenzy of the mobs and the unsettling zealousness of the pharisaeans in terms which echo his own experience with the Dutch clergy.

Within a year from the day the truce was concluded, in 1610, the bomb exploded at Leiden University. Three years later, discord on Calvinist orthodoxy had divided the nation to the bone. Grotius’ next reference to the problem is to be distilled, again in an almost oblique way, in his very deliberately irenic tract Meletius of 1611, an open letter to his friend Boreel, which lends a penetrating insight into Dutch society. In the opening paragraphs, Grotius muses philosophically on this curious phenomenon that Europeans, when roaming the Middle East, tend to greet any fellow Europeans they meet as dear friends and almost as relatives,

89 Meulenbroek, Poetry of Hugo Grotius, vol. 1.2.5.

90 Christus patiens, II. 379ff., 421ff., 539ff. (on the pharisaeans) and 359ff. (on the commoners).

91 See Nobbs, Theocracy and Toleration; and the introduction to van Dam’s critical edition of Grotius’ De imperio summarum (note 12 above).

whereas they would perfectly ignore the same men when coming across them within the European compass.

Likewise we ourselves who live in these parts not only consider the other Europeans as foreigners, but even we as Germans are differentiated as High and Low Germans. Firstly, the Low Germans are kept divided by the recollection of a war which is hardly over; next, some are Guelders and others Frisians; and would that the peoples of Holland and Zeeland, who always used to be closely connected, differed only in name and not also in sympathy! Not to mention at this point the cities—rival centers rather the quarrels between city districts, or the enmity between the great families. When we take all this into consideration, there is no doubt that neighbors and relatives seem more alien to one another than Italians or even Spaniards seemed to you when you stayed in Syria.93

The year 1613 was to become the crucial one. Misinterpreting the outcome of a lengthy personal interview with James I when visiting London as the head of the Dutch delegation to the Colonial Conference,94 and erroneously satisfied with the king’s support to Oldenbarnevelt’s essentially Erastian policy, Grotius, provoked by a vehement pamphlet questioning the States’ policy,95 and for once throwing all warnings from friends to the winds, penned a vehement treatise on the authority of the States in church matters.96 The repercussions were disastrous. In fact, the total of irenic tracts written by Grotius throughout his lifetime would not add up to counterbalance the damage done by this single invective and its sequels. In the year when, at Oldenbarnevelt’s instigation, he was being appointed pensionary of Rotterdam and thereby offered the stepping-stone to the eventual position of Landsadvocaat, Grotius, through the Ordinum Pietas (On the Discretion of the States), lost all credibility with the strict orthodox clergy in Holland. As his spouse would correctly analyze in retrospect, from that moment on his career was doomed.

Ever-more cornered, Oldenbarnevelt, also at Grotius’ prompting, decided on ever-more stringent resolutions to enforce peace in the land. In 1616, Grotius himself rendered a gem of a speech in the Amsterdam

93 See Meletius, par. 1. Many similar observations, also regarding the straitjacket of dogmas, are made throughout pars. 2–5 and 89–91.
95 The reference is to the attacks by Sibrandus Lubbertus, a Franeker theologian, on the States’ policy in appointing Conrad Vorstius at Leiden.
96 The reference is to Ordinum Pietas.
City Council in a desperate but futile attempt to win the city over to Oldenbarnevelt. By then, Maurice had made up his mind and thrown in his lot with the other faction. And Grotius? The man who in 1601, when proudly presenting a copy of his *Adamus exul* to no less a figure than Justus Lipsius, had argued in a complementary letter that whatever he would write in his life would be devoid of all partisanship and be aimed exclusively at the *katholikon kai oikoumenikon,* had nonetheless been lured by party politics into irreparable bias.

At that juncture of 1616, Grotius was consulted by a dear friend of his, the prominent literator P.C. Hooft, on the epilogue of his forthcoming political play *Baeto,* which focuses on the life of the legendary ancestor of all Batavians. The play was meant to grace the ceremonial opening of the new playhouse in Amsterdam. Hooft’s dilemma was whether or not *Baeto* should be raised on the shield, according to German custom (the *elevatio*). In other words, should one present the prince of Orange with the *principatus* so as to unite the people under his banner? Grotius, who in 1610, in his *De antiquitate,* before all Europe had steadfastly advocated the time-honored and unrestricted sovereignty of the States General, after ample consideration seems to have reluctantly concluded to the affirmative. One is inclined to read in this counsel Grotius’ implicit admission of the failure of Oldenbarnevelt’s policy, which had also been his own.

Fate, however, would ordain differently. The tumor would linger on for another two years, then finally come to a head in Prince Maurice’s *coup d’état* of August 1618, which brought Oldenbarnevelt to the scaffold and Grotius to Loevestein, as a mere prelude to twenty-five years of exile and a complete reorientation of his life and thought. Maurice’s *coup* would never solve the riddle. The innate particularism, political bipartition, and, to a lesser extent, religious strife would keep the Republic divided until the Napoleonic era, and numerous were the victims that would fall on the anvil.

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97 *Briefwisseling* 1, p. 20, no. 25, letter dated November 1, 1601.

98 Ibid., pp. 530, 531, 560, nos. 476, 479, 500, letters written between October and December 1616.

99 In the end publication was postponed, mainly out of political considerations, until after Maurice’s demise in 1625; the play was first staged in 1626.
THE INTRINSIC VALUE OF ‘DE REPUBLICA EMENDANDA’

As we stipulated above, the tract here under consideration abounds with shortcomings. Still, these seem to evaporate instantly before the incontestable fact that *De Republica Emendanda* stands out as a first-ever synopsis on the part of the most outstanding and consummate intellectual of the first quarter of the seventeenth century in the Netherlands with regard to the most crucial dilemmas that clung to, indeed paralyzed, the political experiment that was meant to shoulder the triumphant Dutch Republic. From his early teens, Grotius’ life was determined by precisely the issues that were first tackled, ever so hesitantly, in this tract. Its feeble voice from the first decade of the Republic prefigures the virtual inevitability of the crisis twenty years later.

This on the matter of political substance. To what extent should the comparison with the Hebrew commonwealth be called incidental or fundamental? Clearly, as with the *Parallelon* of 1602 and *De antiquitate* of 1610, we have little difficulty in unmasking its lack of historicity and in identifying the innate shortcomings of this typical humanist approach, which aimed at summoning so-called evidence by reference to citations that were, often enough, distorted out of all context, to serve a preset objective. Clearly, the biblical research underlying *De Republica Emendanda* is worlds apart from Grotius’ painstaking, indeed epochal research of later decades, which has reserved a well-deserved and lasting place in the prestigious history of biblical exegesis in the Netherlands. Although steeped in Mosaic law, there is very little originality or creativity in either its references or its line of thought. In about 1600, the youngster availed himself readily, indeed shamelessly, of authors such as Bertram and Sigonius. Still, there was no better way for Grotius to try and persuade dissenters of his advocacy of a temperate aristocracy within a centralized and united confederacy than by reference to God’s chosen people, with whom Dutch Calvinists so readily identified themselves. There is much to be said against the historicity of Grotius’ presentation of the ancient Hebrew commonwealth, but this leaves the topicality of the comparative element to contemporary political reality unscathed.

Incidentally, apart from his evaluation of the Hebrew commonwealth, Sigonius, like Grotius, also produced a tract *De Republica Atheniensium* (*On the Athenian Republic*).
Epilogue

Even in exile, Grotius never lost sight of the fatherland or interest in its vagaries. In 1632, after ten years of exile—with Maurice long succeeded by Prince Frederic-Henry, with most Remonstrant clergymen long recalled from exile, and the sharp edges of the Synod of Dordrecht blunted—Grotius, ill-advised by friends, ventured his return. Within a matter of weeks he had to beat a hasty retreat to Hamburg. It meant a painful disillusionment and psychic upheaval. Then, out of the blue, Axel Oxenstiern’s invitation to represent the Swedish Crown in Paris was dropped in his lap like manna.

The next year, his third biblical drama was published, *Sophompaneas*, which depicts the life of Joseph as deputy king of Egypt. The play reveals Grotius’ consummate literary skills, as he had given earlier proof of his versatility in so many other disciplines. But more than this, unlike any playwright before him on this extremely popular theme in the seventeenth century, Grotius presents the patriarch, in reference to Mosaic law, as the perfect administrator, the epitome of political wisdom, and a great conciliator. Well positioned to make his brothers repay the pit at Dothan, instead he reaches out to them in a truly brotherly manner. But apart from this, the deputy king is presented reorganizing Egyptian society and redrafting a new constitution for his people. Dozens of lines are devoted to this model constitution, and there is little coincidence here. Grotius was not the only one to be struck by the parallel of his life with that of Joseph. Given the clear parallel drawn throughout, Joseph’s new constitution mirrors the one that this humanist in Paris wished to convey to his compatriots as the ideal polity for the Dutch Republic. Needless to say, in many respects, this constitution reveals particulars which we find

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first drafted in *De Republica Emendanda*. A full thirty-five years later, and with an accumulated wealth of political experience, Grotius’ views had not changed fundamentally, and neither had the inspiration he, like so many of his compatriots in Holland, drew from the Mosaic law and the Hebrew constitution.

A final issue which perhaps imposes itself here concerns the extent to which the above affected Grotius’ position with respect to contemporary Judaism, also given the growing influx of Sephardic Jews and Marranos into the northern Netherlands—following their expulsion in previous centuries—since the fall of Antwerp in 1585. We can only touch on this ever so briefly. The first two decades of Jewish immigration are discussed in more detail in my introductory note to Cunaeus’ treatise. Meanwhile, commentators have traditionally disagreed widely as to Grotius’ position.106 Diehard Calvinists have accused him of philo-Semitism, calling him *judaizans* as much as others have accused him of being *papizans*, “catchall epithets” of the period, as they have wisely been called by one modern commentator.107 According to one colorful tradition, Grotius would at some stage even have considered converting to Judaism. More recent appraisals reveal him as having been far less benign to Judaism. As Rabbie observes correctly, Grotius’ references to Judaism should never be taken at face value but carefully weighed within their context. Still, there are a few benchmarks to guide us in properly evaluating his attitude toward Jews and Judaism.

In 1614–1615, Grotius, in an official capacity, drew up a memorandum “concerning the order which should be imposed upon the Jews” in Holland.108 It is a reflection upon the immigration process to which Grotius first refers in his *Meletius* of 1611 in otherwise commonplace terms, which betrays neither special interest nor sympathy with the Jewish community in Holland.109 The same holds true for the 1615 *Remonstrantie*. The dilemma that vexed the authorities at the time was that, while these Jews were political refugees from Spanish tyranny as

106 In his “Grotius and Judaism” (note 55 above), Rabbie presents an interesting overview of these traditions.


much as the Dutch themselves, to officially grant them freedom of religion would imply a curious “positive discrimination” vis-à-vis the Roman Catholics and certain Protestant denominations who were formally denied the possibility of freely exercising their beliefs. To solve this riddle, two champions of orthodoxy—Hugo Grotius, the Rotterdam city pensionary, on behalf of the (more lenient) followers of Arminius, or Remonstrants; and Adriaan Pauw, the Amsterdam city pensionary, on behalf of the (more stringent) adepts of Gomarus, or Contra-Remonstrants—were invited to submit propositions. The outcome, predictably, was inconclusive. As before, Jewish policy was left to city magistrates, a decision that was formalized by resolution of the States of Holland in December 1619.¹¹⁰

Meanwhile, the debate on the substance of this matter is of some interest. Grotius advocated a policy that, from our point of view at least, appears as rather ambivalent. In viewing this, however, one must take into consideration all the prejudices of the period. The pogrom that took place that very year in Frankfurt is symptomatic of the ways ministers mobilized the rudimentary resentments of the mobs against all dissenters. Reactions to recent incidents in Holland had been very similar.¹¹¹ The core of Grotius’ views was the following: the Jewish religion is not even remotely akin to the Christian religion. Still, it is extremely useful to learn Hebrew, if only for biblical research, and to that extent contacts with Jews are helpful. Also, a Christian is bound to try and convert Jews. By the same token, Jews must be forbidden by law to try and convert Christians. To that extent, freedom of the press for the Jews should be restricted. Again, public ceremonies in synagogues are out of the question. Intermarriage or intercourse with Christians, even with prostitutes, must be prohibited, nor should a Christian be submitted to the ignominy of serving a Jewish household. Jews are not to be admitted to public office, however, they are at liberty to study at university centers, notably Leiden. Again, inasmuch as Jews serve commercial interests, no restrictions whatsoever should be imposed on them in this domain, as long as Jewish shopkeepers observe Sundays and Christian holidays. Finally, ghettos or restricted areas are not to be imposed.

¹¹⁰ See on this in my forthcoming introductory note to Cunaeus’ *De Republica Hebraeorum*.

¹¹¹ Such as in Hoorn, where Mennonites had converted to Judaism, or in Amsterdam, where a Jew was caught having intercourse with a Christian girl, let alone the incident of the married Jewish pharmacist who was caught committing adultery with a Christian maidservant in 1616.
It is not difficult to see that the *Remonstrantie* is the product of very peculiar circumstances and conflicting interests. Well aware of the sensitivities on both sides, Grotius advocated a pragmatic, considerate approach in which, clearly, mutual commercial interests and intellectual exchange played a substantial role. Stock elements of similar edicts abroad—as well as in other provinces of the Republic—such as the wearing of special attire, the interdiction of circumcision, or restrictions in terms of numbers of immigrants, are not to be found here. As for the interdiction of *connubium*, against the backdrop of similar prohibitions of Sephardic and Ashkenazic Jews amongst one another, one can hardly call this notion far-fetched or reactionary. The same held for most other suggestions by Grotius, as subsequent practice would demonstrate. In Amsterdam, by decree in November 1616, the exercise of religious practice by Jews, if in silence and unobtrusive, was granted. But the restrictions on synagogues, sexual intercourse, and the conversion of Christians were stringently upheld. With respect to ghettos, the States Resolution of December 1619 gave city councils license to open restricted areas for Jews.

Five years later, Grotius tackled the issue from a completely different angle. During his imprisonment he drew up an apologetic poem, *Bewijs van den waren Godsdienst* (*Proofs of the Proper Worship of God*), later to be elaborated in his scholarly *De Veritate religionis Christianae* (*On the Truth of the Christian Faith*) of 1627.\(^{112}\) Within this apologetic context of traditionally staunch refutation of Judaism, Grotius’ verdict on the Jews stands out as surprisingly mild by comparison. Inevitably, post-Christian Judaism is refuted as a superseded, intermediate stage between paganism and Christianity but in no harsh terms. Book 5 of *De Veritate* deals exclusively with Judaism, notably the refutation of traditional Jewish arguments against Christianity, such as Jesus’ status as the Messiah, his

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\(^{112}\) *De Veritate religionis Christianae* of 1627 is a great apology of Christianity in the tradition of Vives and Duplessis-Mornay (the two sources explicitly acknowledged by Grotius). On the tradition, see Avery Dulles, *A History of Apologetics* (London: Hutchinson, 1971). In *De Veritate*, Grotius argued not so much against the increasing atheism and skepticism of his day and age as rather against the devastating discord among the endless Christian denominations. In this, he focused on ethics above all: Piety, rather than dogma, should inspire Christians, he felt, and practical toleration rather than learned doctrine. He then elaborates his theory of necessary and unnecessary doctrines as first developed by Erasmus and later by Junius in his *Eirenicon* of 1593. On the latter treatise, see Christiaan De Jonge, *De irenische ecclesiologie van Franciscus Junius* (1542-1602) (Nieuwkoop: De Graaf, 1980). Already in 1616, Grotius had ardently advocated the same in his eloquent and impressive but futile address to the Amsterdam City Council of May 1616. Again, in his *De Imperio*, Grotius argued that theologians would do wise in following the example of lawyers who had long since realized the dangers implicated in all-too-strict definitions.
miracles, and his position toward Mosaic law. The book reveals far more sympathy than shown in Book 6 toward Islam and enters into much more detail. However, in these references it is never quite clear to what phase of Jewish tradition Grotius is referring. Clearly, the Old Testament is the major reference for his entire text. As Heering argues, Duplessis-Mornay’s *L’Advertissement aux Juifs* (1607) must have been one of Grotius’ principal sources and may even have inspired its mildly philo-Semitic tone. Grotius readily acknowledges the debt of Christianity toward Mosaic law and the Jewish tradition, extensively praises the Jewish religion on the grounds of its antiquity, meanwhile making short shrift of later talmudic tradition, and ending with a prayer to God to enlighten the Jews and forgive them. Later in life, in his *Annotationes* on the Testaments, Grotius once more discussed many issues relating to Jewish history and customs in full detail. His undogmatic approach would invoke incriminations of Judaizing by stern Calvinists. Even so, Grotius concludes with infamy and ridicule of the Talmud. It would seem that, in drawing up his final verdict, he was preoccupied with the Old Testament rather than contemporary Judaism. In this context, commentators have rightly pointed to Grotius’ scarce contacts with the Jewish community in the Netherlands and the absence of any affection toward its figurehead, the Amsterdam rabbi Menasseh ben Israel. In this, one should appreciate that, from 1621 onward, the role of the Jewish community in the Netherlands can have hardly been a priority for the lifelong exile. Meanwhile, as is well known, in his otherwise poor estimate of later Jewish literature, Grotius makes explicit exception for Maimonides, for whose merits as a scholar he reserves a place of honor throughout his works.

A last benchmark is Grotius’ massive *Annotationes* on the Bible, the work of a lifetime, most of which was published posthumously. Inevitably, these impressive commentaries on the Old and New Testaments abound with references to Jewish history, literature, society, and religion, and it is here that we can observe the above-mentioned increase of factual knowledge of customs and rituals—and accordingly of sympathy—which seem the harvest of intimate reading of texts in

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114 Ibid., p. 106ff.
116 Ibid., pp. 112–113. Cf. Cunaeus’ appraisal of Maimonides, which will be expounded upon in my forthcoming introduction to Cunaeus’ *De Republica Hebraeorum*. 
Latin translations. Even so, also later in life, Grotius’ interest in Judaism, historical and contemporary, seems to have been spurred primarily by the demands of his philological research, indeed as much as the historic parallel in *De Republica Emendanda* was urged on by Dutch sociopolitical conditions.

The Hague