For sixteenth-century Western Europe the Ottoman Empire represented a larger than life threat in much the same way that the Soviet Union did in the second half of the twentieth century. This threat led Peter Martyr Vermigli to include in his lectures on Lamentations an analogy between the Babylonian conquest of Jerusalem (the subject of the Book of Lamentations) and the apparent aim of the Ottoman Turks to conquer the rest of Europe. He included this analogy, which is in effect a theodicy, in spite of his express intention merely to make the prophet’s message plain. This leads us first to investigate Peter Martyr’s method of scripture interpretation in his Lamentations lectures and second to look closely at his applications of the ancient prophet’s message to the Turkish conquests of his own time.

Peter Martyr began the Protestant period of his scripture teaching career by expositing first the Minor Prophets and then Lamentations, of which only the Lamentations exposition remains accessible.1 After Lamentations, Peter Martyr most probably proceeded to the Pentateuch, Genesis first.2 Genesis is typical of all the remainder of his scripture exposition: it is expansive, replete with allusions, garnished with extended excursus (also called ‘loci’), enriched with pastoral asides, and

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1 Peter Martyr Vermigli, *Commentary on the Lamentations*, ed. Shute, PML vol. 6 (Kirksville, Missouri: Truman State University Press, 2002) [hereafter cited CLJ], xlvi n. 103–104, 8. Simler was not correct: Josiah Simler, *Life of Peter Martyr Vermigli*, ed. Donnelly, The Peter Martyr Library vol. 5 (Kirksville, Missouri: Truman State University Press, 1999), 28. Regarding the missing (never published) lectures on the Minor Prophets, there is a possibility that they may be among the unclassified manuscripts of the Zentral Bibliothek in Zurich (Emidio Campi, personal conversation, at the Third International Conference of the Peter Martyr Society, held at the Faculty of Religious Studies, McGill University, Montreal, Canada, 8–10 August 2007).

2 Josiah Simler, *Life of Peter Martyr Vermigli*, in LLS 28, 33. Simler states incorrectly that Vermigli commenced his Protestant lectures with Lamentations.
even embellished with the occasional allegory. By comparison the Lamentations commentary is severely philological, although it does share with the later commentaries an intimidating knowledge of medieval Jewish philology and does include practical applications.

Peter Martyr not only expounded scripture, he also gave detailed teaching on the nature of scripture and its proper interpretation. This does not mean that he presented his ‘hermeneutic’ in today’s sense, that is, his theory of revelation, text, interpretation, and Bible. Peter Martyr’s hermeneutic must be distilled from many places in his writings; this task Jason Zuidema has begun. Rather Peter Martyr presented his doctrine of scripture and its proper interpretation, a restricted sense of hermeneutic that will be respected here.

In his preface to his Lamentations lectures, Peter Martyr has a short introduction to method in interpretation. As brief as these comments on method are, they form, whether by design or chance, a sort of précis of his teaching on scripture and its interpretation. Peter Martyr begins this short discussion thus: ‘It remains for me to explain to you exactly how I have decided to go about the interpretation of this book. Principally I shall take care to make plain in as open a manner as possible the meaning of the prophet’s words.’ Here we are reminded that pre-Enlightenment interpreters thought of the text as an objective truth to be investigated. The modern, and more particularly post-modern, notion of the inaccessibility of authorial intent of a text was yet to come. At the same time, historical-critical method was at best nascent; Peter Martyr

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3 Peter Martyr Vermigli, *In primum librum Mosis, qui vulgo Genesis dicitur, commentarii doctissimi* (Zurich: Froeschauer, 1569) [cited hereafter GEN]: expansive, e.g. an aside on the creation of angels (2r); allusions, e.g. the first paragraph contains explicit allusions to Aristotle, Virgil, and Origen (2r); first typographically demarcated excursus (35v, *De Sacrificiis*); first allegory (5v).

4 *GEN* 2r, contains the first explicit allusion to Hebraica, viz., the Jerusalem Targum.


7 *CLJ* 6.