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Peter Martyr Vermigli (1499-1562) and the outward instruments of divine grace

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By  
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To Anna and Nancy  
and in Memory of David



## **Abstract**

The Reformed exegete and theologian Peter Martyr Vermigli (1499-1562) was an unoriginal, but consistent thinker. Theological insights were not packaged separately from each other, but consistently linked together. In all his thought he sought to steer the middle course between theological extremes in taking what was good and rejecting what was bad from each. Typical of this tendency to steer the middle course are his insights into the outward instruments of divine grace. According to Vermigli such instruments—the human nature of Christ, the audible words of Scripture and the visible words of the Sacraments—should not be over-carnalized, nor over-spiritualized. Although God could work immediately (i.e. without instruments), he has chosen to work through these instruments for salvation. Hence, the inward spiritual power and the outward instrument must not be divorced from each other. The Spirit of God does not normally work without the outward instrument, nor can the outward instrument effect grace without the Spirit's power.

Modern scholarship has done much to define the sources of Vermigli's thought, but more needs to be said. The more Vermigli is studied, the more it is necessary to qualify characterizations of him. He is not a thinker who is easily pigeon-holed into a certain theological school or movement. As a well-educated biblical and humanistic scholar, Vermigli took independent and well-reasoned positions on the whole variety of theological questions current in his day. As such, this study attempts to view the inter-connected nature of Vermigli's thought so as to gain a better view of the whole of his thought.

## Résumé

Le réformateur et exégète Peter Martyr Vermigli ( 1499-1562 ) était un penseur peu original mais fort conséquent. Ses idées théologiques n'étaient pas séparées les unes des autres, mais plutôt étroitement liées entre elles. Dans toute sa pensée, Vermigli cherchait la voie du centre entre des positions théologiques extrêmes, en gardant le bon et en rejetant le mauvais parmi elles. Typique de cette tendance est sa réflexion sur les moyens externes de la grâce divine. Selon Vermigli, ces moyens, c'est-à-dire, la nature humaine du Christ, la parole audible dans l'Écriture, et la parole visible dans les sacrements, ne doivent être compris ni trop charnellement ni trop spirituellement. Bien que Dieu puisse intervenir directement ( *i.e.* sans moyens ), il a décidé de recourir à ces moyens de salut. Il en résulte que la puissance spirituelle intérieure ne doit jamais être séparée du moyen externe. L'Esprit de Dieu n'agit pas normalement sans le moyen externe, tandis que le moyen externe ne peut attribuer la grâce sans la puissance de l'Esprit.

La recherche moderne sur Vermigli a beaucoup parlé des sources de sa pensée, mais il faut en dire davantage. Plus on étudie Vermigli, plus il est nécessaire de modifier les descriptions de lui dans cette littérature. Il n'est pas facile de classer ce penseur comme membre d'une école de pensée ou d'un mouvement théologique précis. Bibliste et humaniste cultivé, Vermigli a adopté des positions indépendantes et bien réfléchies dans les débats théologiques de son époque. En conséquence, la présente étude cherche à examiner les liens reliant l'ensemble de la théologie de Vermigli, afin de mieux apprécier sa pensée dans sa globalité.

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### List of Abbreviations

(For full bibliographic references see 'Vermigli Studies Bibliography')

- ANE* *Commentary on Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics*. PML Vol. 9.
- CP* *The Common Places*.
- DIAL* *Dialogue on the two natures in Christ*. PML Vol 2.
- DM* *The Life, Early Letters & Eucharistic Writings of Peter Martyr*. eds. Duffield and McLelland.
- EW* *Early writings: creed, Scripture, church*. PML Vol. 1.
- GEN* *In Primum Librum Mosis qui vulgo Genesis dicitur Commentarii*.
- JUD* *Most fruitfull and learned commentaries of Doctor Peter Martir Vermil... (Judges)*
- LAM* *Commentary on Lamentations of the prophet Jeremiah*. PML Vol. 6.
- LC* *Loci Communes*.
- LLS* *Life, letters, and sermons*. PML Vol. 4.
- OTD* *The Oxford Treatise and Disputation on the Eucharist*. PML Vol. 7.
- PJ* *Two Theological Loci: Predestination and Justification*. PML Vol. 8.
- PMR* *The Peter Martyr Reader*.
- PW* *Philosophical works: on the relation of philosophy to theology*. PML Vol. 3.
- ROM* *Most learned and fruitfull commentaries...vpon the Epistle of S. Paul to the Romanes*.

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Several organizations and libraries supported my work on this project. In the summer of 2003 I received a scholarship to participate in a 16<sup>th</sup> Century Genevan Palaeography Course at the H. Henry Meeter Center for Calvin Studies, Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Michigan. The staff was helpful during those two weeks, and have often helped me track down a difficult resource since that time. Thanks in particular to Paul Fields.

From January to August 2005 I received a bursary to study at the Johannes à Lasco Bibliothek in Emden, Germany. Dr. Herman Selderhuis, Dr. Walter Schulz and all

the other librarians were most helpful and obliging. This stimulating environment was made all the more interesting by their wonderful accommodations and by the presence of scholars from across the world.

For the three last years of my stay at McGill I have benefited from a scholarship funded through a S.S.H.R.C. (Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council) research grant of my supervisor Dr. Torrance Kirby. Besides securing this funding, Dr. Kirby allowed me to be his teaching assistant and participate in many conferences which I could not have otherwise been able to attend. In his seminars and other discussions I learned a great deal about the Reformation and Christian thought.

Despite the great deal of help I have received along this journey, any fault of this dissertation remains my own. If there is any good which remains, I am sure that must be shared with a number of Vermigli scholars I have met upon the way. Not only have studies of Vermigli's life and thought been of high-scholarly merit, but they have been written by a genuinely friendly and caring group of scholars. Apart from the Vermigli scholars already mentioned, I thank Dr. John Patrick Donnelly, S.J., Dr. Gary Jenkins and Dr. Frank A. James III. These men, along with a host of others, warmly welcomed me into the guild of Vermigli scholars.

Besides those responsible for my academic peregrination, I thank my ecclesiastical and professional colleagues and friends, especially my colleagues and friends in the Église Réformée du Québec and Farel Faculté de Théologie Réformée. I especially thank Dr. Daniel Timmer, the Reverend Jean Zoellner, the Reverend Jean-Guy deBlois, the Reverend Meine Veldman, the Reverend Fritz Harms, and Mr. Philippe deBlois.

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For keeping me happy and in touch with life outside the 16<sup>th</sup> century I thank my wife Anna. Most especially, she is the one who faithfully reminds me to read the Bible and pray.

Above all, I thank God from whom all blessings flow.

## Preface

In the last several generations interest in the Reformed biblical exegete and theologian Peter Martyr Vermigli (1499-1562) has grown dramatically. The present essay is a further contribution to this grand discussion surrounding the life and work of this international Reformer. Vermigli did not found any new religious organization or leave any discernable 'school' of thought; yet, in his own quietly passionate way he influenced theological minds throughout Western Europe. Although he sought unoriginality and orthodoxy in his doctrinal leanings, his scholarly method stimulated much important scholarship. In addition to his substantial *corpus* of writings, Vermigli was one of the most high-profile international Reformers of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. For almost the entirety of his adult life, both as Roman Catholic and Protestant, Vermigli engaged with the brightest and most important theological luminaries of Europe. Hence, even though largely forgotten by several centuries of scholarship, his life and thought are a good vantage point from which to see the totality of the Reformation.

The purpose of this present essay is not simply to understand a few more historical details about Vermigli's life, but, rather, to understand his theological outlook, his methodological presuppositions, the sources of his thought and the goals of his life's work. This quest is not new: it is a question the last several generations of Vermigli scholars have been asking and answering in a very detailed manner. Yet, there is still a great deal to learn.

Centrally, is Vermigli's thought compartmentalized, or can it be linked together? Certainly Vermigli does not evidence a sort of 'central dogma' from which he deduces



the rest of his thought, yet does this mean his thought is not 'systematic'? His *Loci Communes*, a collection of theological topics drawn from his commentaries, was compiled a generation after his death.<sup>1</sup> Would he have found such a systematisation an abstraction of his thought? Although it is impossible to know Vermigli's comments on the *Loci Communes*, it is clear that Vermigli's thought was, indeed, not scattered, but coherent. Solutions in one theological domain brought clarity for problems in others. He did not seek to be a systematic theologian of the modern deductive type, but nonetheless his thought can be linked together.

Vermigli was no casual observer of Reformation disputes—rather he had a critical and informed reading of the central theological questions of his day. He was not a blind follower of one theologian or school of theology, but had his own well-developed ideas from his study of Scripture and the entire western intellectual tradition. A particularly illuminating example of his general hermeneutical approach and the coherence of his thought is his reading of the outward instruments of divine grace. These external elements—Christ's human nature, the written words of Scripture and the visible signs of the sacraments, to name the most important—are not considered in mutual isolation but in relation to each other and to the rest of his theological system. In all he wishes to avoid saying too much about these outward elements of grace, but also too little. He certainly has an independent theological vision, but one which seeks to steer the middle road between an over-carnalization and an over-spiritualization of the outward elements.

The 'middle road' Vermigli sought was certainly in his own conception of biblical religion and Christian orthodoxy. Many then, as now, would not agree with his

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<sup>1</sup> *Loci Communes*, ed. Robert Masson (London, 1576).

description of these theological extremes. Yet, as a man committed to understanding and commenting on the Christianity of his day, his voice is nonetheless important. His was not the voice of one who knew little of the Bible and Christianity, but of a seasoned scholar who had an intimate knowledge of that of which he wrote.

Further, the extremes of over-carnalization and over-spiritualization, although terms created for this present essay, are not foreign to Vermigli's thought. He often talks of extremes in theological thought. He truly sought to have a proper carnality and proper spirituality. In modern usage 'carnal' is usually negative, and hence would not necessarily be a pair with spiritual. Yet, in Scripture, which Vermigli prized so highly, 'carnal' can have two different meanings. In Pauline usage 'carnal' is usually negative; the carnal in Paul is linked to the former Adamic fallen nature. Yet in the opening chapters of John the sense is very positive. 'The Word became flesh' (John 1:14): the second person of the Trinity became *incarnate*. The carnality of Christ is held very highly by John. Over-carnalization for Vermigli, then, would be to misuse this positive Johannine sense of carnality.

The present essay seeks to study this middle road of Vermigli's theological method by highlighting his treatment of the most important examples of outward elements. After presenting the current state and importance of the question, its medieval and reformation context are discussed (chapters 1 and 2). Clearly Vermigli had deeply studied the question and formulates his theology with a view to achieving a right balance between the outward/carnal and inward/spiritual aspects of the instruments of divine grace.

The main body of the essay (chapters 3 to 5) presents the most important examples of Vermigli's attempt to steer the middle course with respect to these outward elements. Chapter 3 discusses Vermigli's Christological thought. Such thought was based on an overtly Chalcedonian logic which sought to protect the relationship between the human and divine natures in Christ. In Scripture, too, such 'natures' are to be protected (Chapter 4). The Spirit can work outside of the letter of Scripture, but normally works with and through the letter. As such, the audible words of God have an instrumental power. Such an instrument cannot simply be divorced from its Spiritual substance though excessive carnalization, nor can it simply be ignored through an over-spiritualization, but must be taken seriously as a manifestation of God's word. Indeed, taking God's written Word seriously was Vermigli's life's career as biblical exegete. His methodology of biblical interpretation was therefore by no means simply assumed, but rather seriously reflected, explicitly formulated, and deeply sophisticated.

This middle course is evident in his treatment of sacramental theology as much as with his Christology and biblical hermeneutics. In the case of the Eucharist more than any other issue, Vermigli sought to avoid 'crass' over-carnalization and a 'simple' over-spiritualization. Although such has been pointed out by other scholars, it is pointed out again here with a consideration of his comments on the bending of the knee before the host. Properly to understand the reason for which the most thoroughly Reformed worshipper could, if well instructed, bend the knee before the Host, one must understand Vermigli's middle course on the outward instruments.

All Vermigli's theologizing on the outward instruments is not merely theoretical, 'ivory-tower' speculation, but aims to address the heart of his Christianity. In chapter 6

Vermigli's thought on these instruments is linked to his doctrine of union with Christ. Union with Christ is indeed the goal of his thought, and hence a proper understanding of the instruments which propel this union is fundamental to the study. By means of such an approach, our hope is to demonstrate how Vermigli's thought concerning the outward elements of grace opens up a clear window to understand his overall theological program and the theology of the Reformed branch of Protestantism in the 16<sup>th</sup> century.

Much of this essay is a close reading of Vermigli's own writings. Hence, a word about the sources is necessary. For ease of citation in English, I have used, where possible, the excellent translations of the *Peter Martyr Library*. Secondly, I have made use of the Elizabethan English translations of Peter Martyr's texts. Where no English translation exists, I have provided my own translation of the Latin text. In cases of ambiguity or for additional precision, the Latin original is also cited in the notes.

The *Peter Martyr Library* texts present the researcher with a small conundrum in that the notes do the work of a critical edition, all the while presenting the text in translation. Unfortunately, there is very little in the way of critical editions of Vermigli's Latin or Italian originals.<sup>2</sup> Such is doubly difficult with his correspondence. A *desideratum* of future Vermigli scholarship would be to collect and edit his widely-dispersed correspondence.

The present essay is broadly one of historical theology. It assumes that Vermigli acted and wrote, at least if we are to accept him at his word, in the belief that the

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<sup>2</sup> One of the very few critical editions of a Latin text is J. Andreas Löwe's Oxford M.Phil. dissertation: "Disputatio de Eucharistiae sacramento habita in celeberrima universitate Oxoniensi in Anglia, anno domini 1549," (M.Phil. diss., University of Oxford, 1997).

sovereign God of the biblical narrative was still supremely at work in history.<sup>3</sup> Hence, social, economic and political motives are important in an assessment of his thought, but not primary.<sup>4</sup> Most of the focus of this essay will be on the theological writings of Vermigli. In these writings Vermigli sought to present his ideas on any given subject in the clearest way he could.

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<sup>3</sup> For example: *LLS*, 317; *EW*, 28ff.

<sup>4</sup> See Carl R. Trueman and R. Scott Clark, eds., *Protestant Scholasticism: Essays in Reassessment* (Carlisle, Cumbria: Paternoster Press, 1999), xiv-xvi; James E. Bradley and Richard A. Muller, *Church History: An Introduction to Research, Reference Works, and Methods* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995).

## CHAPTER I

### Peter Martyr Vermigli (1499-1562): A Man in the Middle

#### I. Introduction

The problem posed by the place of the outward elements of divine grace in an understanding of salvation was particularly difficult in the time of the Reformation. Indeed, one of the major sticking points in the disputes between the various confessional groups of the half-century after Luther's initial rejection of indulgences was a proper understanding of the outward or visible aspects of the faith. Luther's main claim was that justification was properly by faith only and neither by 'good works' in soteriology, nor the elements of water, bread or wine in the sacraments, nor the visible Church, nor liturgical vestments.<sup>1</sup> Nothing done in the person or the church could merit salvation. Indeed, justification was properly *alien*—coming from another—and therefore not based in the believer.<sup>2</sup> The claim of the imputation of Christ's righteousness to the believer as the sole basis for justification and, hence, salvation was widely shared by the magisterial Reformers against the Roman Catholics (and some radical Protestants)—a claim solidified subsequently by the Council of Trent's decrees specifically against it. The claim of salvation by grace through faith was thus not only Luther's claim but shared

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<sup>1</sup> See Martin Luther, "Preface to Latin Writings," in *Luther's Works*, Vol. 34, ed. Lewis W. Spitz (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1960), 336ff.; Edward F. Cranz, "Martin Luther," in *Reformers in Profile*, ed. B. A. Gerrish (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1967), 86-114; Lowell C. Green, "Luther's Understanding of Justification," in *Encounters with Luther: Papers from the 1983 McGill Luther Symposium*, ed. E.D. Furcha (Montreal: ARC Supplement No. 1, 1984), 45-66; Berndt Hamm, "What was the Reformation Doctrine of Justification," in *The German Reformation*, ed. C. Scott Dixon (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1999), 53-90.

<sup>2</sup> Steven E. Ozment, *Homo Spiritualis* (Leiden: Brill, 1969), 109; Paul Althaus, *The Theology of Martin Luther*, trans. Robert C. Schultz (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966), 227.

vigorously by Protestant theologians. Yet, beyond this initial claim, there was much divergence among the reformers as to what role the outward aspects of religion played in the working out of salvation.

The problem revolved around the importance or place of the outward elements in the process of salvation. The particular nub of the debate was the place the outward elements in the working out of justification: more properly called sanctification. Major questions arose among Protestant theologians and pastors in this debate. Centrally, did the outward elements somehow *cause* or were they *necessary* for the sanctification of the individual Christian? If so, how was this to be understood? Despite the fact that the Reformers generally rejected an *ex opere operato* understanding of the working of divine grace (an understanding of the sacraments that posited grace would be given simply by performing the action of the sacrament), they were still in disagreement about their proper place. Indeed, simply because they rejected a more carnal *ex opere operato* understanding of the working of the sacraments, they did not thereby empty the sacraments of all importance or indeed posit that God should be understood to work immediately, without the mediation of outward instruments.<sup>3</sup> Some among the radical Protestants would approach saying such a thing, but most magisterial reformers generally agreed that there is still a role for the outward elements in salvation. The dispute revolved around what this role was.

The difference of opinion was not simply between Catholics and Protestants, but also among the Protestants. One of the separating factors between the Lutherans and

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<sup>3</sup> For an apparent overstatement of the case see: Abraham Kuyper, *Lectures on Calvinism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1931), 47ff. For comment on Kuyper's ideas: Leonardo De Chirico, *Evangelical Theological Perspectives on post-Vatican II Roman Catholicism* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2003), 247ff.

Reformed was a conception of the outward elements. Most well-known was the rift between Luther and Zwingli on the understanding of the presence of Christ in the Eucharist.<sup>4</sup> Less well-known are the continuing intra-protestant debates about that same question. These intra-protestant debates are among the most interesting because they lay bare the various theological foundations around which Reformation theologians professed their ideas. Although agreeing on the essential doctrines, these initial Reformation theologians present a differing and complex theology of the outward elements.

The debate, in its complexity, is reflected in the thought of Peter Martyr Vermigli.<sup>5</sup> Vermigli was a Florence-born, Reformed theologian who had an amazing number of personal contacts with both Catholic and Protestant groups of his day. As such his thought on the character of the outward elements of salvation was not merely coincidentally formulated, but formulated by interaction, both friendly and not, with the whole range of theologians. What we find in Vermigli is a theology which is deeply-influenced by the whole history of Christian thought—patristic, scholastic, and humanist—and open to using that which is good in human, acquired wisdom for clarification, but yet clearly aspiring, above all else, to make plain the revealed Word of God. It is this general hermeneutical goal that provides us the best entry into the present subject.

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<sup>4</sup> W.P. Stephens, *The Theology of Huldrych Zwingli* (Oxford: Clarendon Press 1986); Althaus, *Theology of Martin Luther*, 393ff.

<sup>5</sup> In research on Vermigli the names 'Peter Martyr Vermigli,' 'Peter Martyr,' 'Martyr' or 'Vermigli' are often used interchangeably. Although his family name 'Vermigli' is often used in modern secondary literature most knew him as 'Peter Martyr' or 'Martyr' in earlier literature. Actually, in some older book indexes he is listed under 'P' or 'M' and not 'V'.



In Vermigli's thought we see a dynamic understanding of the Word of God. His thought links the *incarnate* Word of God, Jesus Christ the Second Person of the Trinity, the *audible* Words of God in written Scripture and preached word, and the *visible* Words of God, the Sacraments. Not only is the link between these 'outward elements' biblical, but all three have an analogical relationship with one another. According to his understanding of Chalcedonian Christology, as Christ has two natures, divine and human, so the written and preached word have two 'natures', word and Spirit, and the sacraments have two 'natures', sign and thing. The analogy is not exact, for the union in Christ has a special place. But these other two are yet analogically and truly related to the incarnate Christ.<sup>6</sup> What this means is that the outward element in scripture, i.e. the written or spoken word, and the physical elements of sacraments, have a special bond with the inward spiritual substance of both Word and Sacrament, just as the human nature of Christ has an intimate union with the divine nature. This allows Vermigli to talk of the true presence of Christ in the Eucharist and the real work of the Spirit in preaching all the while distinguishing the two elements, viz. the inward and spiritual from the outward and visible/audible. The foundational influence of Chalcedonian Christology on Vermigli's thought is thus clearly evident.

Chalcedonian Christology is central to answering our question, but it is not all that is needed. It is secondarily important to show that Vermigli clearly allows for instrumental causality in his thought. Although secondary causality might be a 'truism of scholastic theology,' it is not written about in the same language or with the same

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<sup>6</sup> See comments on 'threefold word' in Vermigli's introduction to *OTD*, 10.

intensity by the reformers.<sup>7</sup> Vermigli's thought is generally unified with his many Reformed colleagues by his teachings on the so-called special instruments of God's grace. Interestingly, not only does this teaching link him with others in the Reformed camp (e.g. Calvin, Bullinger), but it also provides a way to uncover some of the broader sources of Vermigli's thought. Not only can ideas from the early Church Fathers be seen, but the ancient philosophers and medieval scholastic theologians are also present. Importantly, when clarifying the meaning of revealed truth Vermigli did not look only to one source but reveals himself a truly eclectic thinker.

Although the present inquiry is influenced by other studies of Vermigli's thought, is it built on a fresh reading of Vermigli's own writings. The goals of this study are twofold. First, it aims to give a clear exposition of some major links in Vermigli's theology: His thought on the interpretation of Scripture, Christology, and the Sacraments. Two of these topics, Scripture and Christology have yet to be given comprehensive treatment. The sacraments, one of the most studied aspects of Vermigli's theology, will be re-examined with the topic of the outward element in the foreground.<sup>8</sup>

Secondly, however, this study also aims to characterize the larger question of the meaning of the Reformation in the thought of Peter Martyr. Vermigli overtly joined the Protestants a generation after Luther's initial break with Rome, but he himself was, one could say, a 'first-generation' reformer in Italy. When he came North in 1542 to join his fellow Protestants, he was no theological novice or simple follower but had achieved much high-level ecclesiastical experience and had already clearly formulated many of his

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<sup>7</sup> Richard Muller, 'causae secundae,' in his *Dictionary of Latin and Greek Theological Terms* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1985), 63.

<sup>8</sup> For a review of literature on the topic of Vermigli and the Eucharist see ch. 5.

ideas. Other studies on Vermigli's thought have pointed out this theological maturity, but more should be said.<sup>9</sup> His thoughts on justification, the sacraments, and predestination were certainly key throughout his Protestant career, but little has been said about the equally important ideas on sanctification and the role of the outward elements of grace in the Christian life. These little-studied aspects of Vermigli's theology again point to the fact that he was essentially in the Reformed camp and not strictly a follower of Luther. They also indicate that his thought was independently Reformed and that he was not simply a blind follower of another Reformed theologian. As with other Reformed theologians, faith for Vermigli does not simply lead to a declaration of righteousness, but also to the outward operation of righteousness in the Christian. Sanctification, the mysterious and growing union a Christian has with Christ, is neither simply verbal, nor solely carnal, but mysteriously and spiritually present, active and dynamic.

## II. The Vermigli Research Renaissance

In the last fifty years Peter Martyr Vermigli, as many other of the 'Reformers in the Wings', has been the object of an increasing number of in-depth studies.<sup>10</sup> Although several more general works about Vermigli were produced in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and first-

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<sup>9</sup> See Frank A. James III, *Peter Martyr Vermigli and predestination: the Augustinian inheritance of an Italian reformer* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 249; James, "Vermigli, Peter Martyr (1499-1562)," in *Historical Handbook of Major Biblical Interpreters*, ed. Donald McKim (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1998), 243.

<sup>10</sup> David Steinmetz, "Peter Martyr Vermigli (1499-1562): The Eucharistic Sacrifice," in his *Reformers in the Wings. From Geiler von Kayersberg to Theodore Beza*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 106-13, 184-85.

half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century,<sup>11</sup> it was not until two young scholars working independently of each other, Joseph McLelland<sup>12</sup> and Philip McNair<sup>13</sup>, published their findings that contemporary critical scholarship on Vermigli was truly launched. In the 1970s several more important monographs were produced and the first international scholarly conference on Vermigli took place in Montreal. In the mid-1970s a number of new monographs excited interest in the study of Peter Martyr.<sup>14</sup> This second generation of Vermigli scholars was integral to the flowering of Vermigli studies in the following decades. Indeed, even since the publication of the important Peter Martyr Vermigli Bibliography in 1990 the list of articles and books on Vermigli has grown tremendously.<sup>15</sup> Pushed forward by the excellent English-language editions of the *Peter Martyr Library*, a number of important monographs and several recent essay collections, the study of Vermigli has become an important topic in any general Reformation study.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Charles Schmidt, *Peter Martyr Vermigli: Leben und ausgewählte Schriften. Nach handschriftlichen und gleichzeitigen Quellen* (Elberfeld: R.L. Friderichs, 1858); Benjamin F. Paist, "Peter Martyr and the Colloquy of Poissy," *Princeton Theological Review* 20 (1922): 212-231, 418-447, 616-646; Mariano Di Gangi, "Peter Martyr Vermigli, 1500-1562: an Italian Calvinist," (B.D. diss., Presbyterian College, Montreal, 1949).

<sup>12</sup> Joseph C. McLelland, *The Visible Words of God: An Exposition of the Sacramental Theology of Peter Martyr Vermigli, AD 1500-1562* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1957).

<sup>13</sup> Philip McNair, *Peter Martyr in Italy: an anatomy of apostasy* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967).

<sup>14</sup> Marvin W. Anderson, *Peter Martyr, a reformer in exile (1542-1562): a chronology of biblical writings in England & Europe* (Nieuwkoop: B. De Graaf, 1975); John P. Donnelly, *Calvinism and Scholasticism in Vermigli's doctrine of man and grace* (Leiden: Brill, 1976); Klaus Sturm, *Die Theologie Peter Martyr Vermigli's während seines ersten Aufenthalts in Strassburg 1542-1547: ein Reformkatholik unter den Vätern der reformierten Kirche* (Neukirchen: Neukirchener Verlag, 1971); Salvatore Corda, *Veritas sacramenti: a study in Vermigli's Doctrine of the Lord's Supper* (Zürich: Theologischer Verlag, 1975); Robert M. Kingdon, *The Political Thought of Peter Martyr Vermigli: Selected Texts and Commentary* (Geneva: Droz, 1980).

<sup>15</sup> John Patrick Donnelly, ed. with Robert M. Kingdon and Marvin W. Anderson, *A Bibliography of the Works of Peter Martyr Vermigli* (Kirksville, Mo: Sixteenth Century Journal Publishers, 1990), 199-203.

<sup>16</sup> For example: Frank A. James, "Peter Martyr Vermigli (1499-1562)," in *The Reformation Theologians: an Introduction to Theology in the Early Modern Period*, ed. Carter Lindberg (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002),

Many topics are considered in this half-century of literature, but one predominant theme recurs—the question of Vermigli’s sources. Many scholars ask this central question: ‘Who was Vermigli?’ This is not simply a factual question about the biography of Vermigli (although this too has been an important question), but rather a general question about the influences on his thought and his theological vision. Vermigli often escapes facile categorisation and qualification. Hence scholars have attempted to answer this question with heavily modified titles such as ‘Reformed humanist’, ‘intensified Augustinian’, or ‘Protestant scholastic.’<sup>17</sup> Many important monographs and articles have been written on the subject, but it does not seem that the debate is at all settled—at least as far as the sources are concerned. In re-considering the sources perhaps it might be best to refrain from giving a single restrictive title to Vermigli, but rather consider him, within certain bounds, as an eclectic thinker. Indeed, even the designations ‘Reformed humanist’, ‘intensified Augustinian’, or ‘Protestant scholastic’ each require serious qualification. Something in all of these designations is undoubtedly true, but each can certainly not provide a blanket definition which applies to the whole of Vermigli’s theology. What we see in Vermigli rather is a man who defies easy classification and who gives little evidence that his thought has ‘tensions’ such as those thrust upon it by

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198-212. See the Vermigli studies bibliography at the end of this essay for a complete listing of modern secondary sources.

<sup>17</sup> See Frank A. James III, “Peter Martyr Vermigli: At the Crossroads of Late Medieval Scholasticism, Christian Humanism and Resurgent Augustinianism,” in *Protestant Scholasticism: Essays in Reassessment*, eds. Carl R. Trueman and R. Scott Clark (Carlisle, Cumbria: Paternoster Press, 1999), 62-78.

modern historians of theology.<sup>18</sup> A central aim of the present essay is again to take up the question of Martyr's basic theological stance.

To look at the historiographical landscape which constitutes the backdrop of Martyr's basic theological stance, at least four important debates should be surveyed. One debate questions Vermigli's Protestantism: How Protestant was he? Did he share from the beginning of his protestant career the basic theological insights of the other major Reformers, or did he fundamentally disagree with them? Closely related to this first debate is a second which has perhaps most marked Vermigli studies: Was Vermigli a scholastic or a humanist? Important in the development of this debate was to define the terms clearly and to take into account not only what was said, but what was assumed by Vermigli in his scholarship. Third, much has been made of Vermigli's Augustinian heritage. How important was Augustine for Vermigli? What themes from Augustine's thought were important for Vermigli? How and when did he use them? Was Augustine, or any other figure for that matter, a *sine qua non* of his thought? Finally, where does Vermigli fit in the camp of Reformed theologians? Was he a faithful 'Calvinist' or a lone ranger? What did he share with others and have for himself? Answers to the questions of these four debates are manifold and will provide the basis of proceeding with the present inquiry.

#### **A. Vermigli: Protestant or Catholic?**

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<sup>18</sup> See Joseph C. McLelland, "Translator's Introduction," in *PW*, xx ff.; McLelland, "Peter Martyr Vermigli: scholastic or humanist?" in *Peter Martyr Vermigli and Italian Reform*, ed. Joseph C. McLelland (Waterloo, On.: Sir Wilfred Laurier University Press, 1980), 141-152.

Vermigli was very well-trained in Catholic theology. It comes as no surprise, then, that some modern historians find important links between his Catholic and Protestant professions. In a 1976 monograph on Vermigli's theology during his first stay in Strasbourg, Klaus Sturm argued that in this period Vermigli was not fully a Reformed theologian, but rather '*reformkatholic*.'<sup>19</sup> Sturm argued that Vermigli certainly had much affinity for Protestant theology, but formulated his thought in such a way that Catholics could also agree with his statements.<sup>20</sup> Although the specifics of this thesis have been critiqued by other scholars,<sup>21</sup> the close relationship Vermigli had with Catholic thought has been largely supported. Most concertedly, John Patrick Donnelly argued for a widespread influence of Thomism throughout the career of Vermigli.<sup>22</sup>

More recently Frank James has argued against the crypto-Catholicism of Vermigli by showing Vermigli's fundamental agreement with the other major reformers on justification.<sup>23</sup> James makes the case that Vermigli's rejection of any Catholic understanding of justification is based on his "deep-seated Augustinian anthropology."<sup>24</sup> Such anthropology caused Vermigli to reject any neo-Pelagian theory of justification

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<sup>19</sup> Sturm, *Die Theologie Peter Martyr Vermigli*, 62ff.

<sup>20</sup> Sturm, *Die Theologie Peter Martyr Vermigli*, 63.

<sup>21</sup> See Donnelly's review of Sturm in *The Sixteenth Century Journal* (Oct. 1973): 118.

<sup>22</sup> Donnelly, *Calvinism and Scholasticism*, 154.

<sup>23</sup> Frank A. James III, "*De justificatione*: The evolution of Peter Martyr Vermigli's doctrine of justification," (Ph.D. diss., Westminster Theological Seminary, 2000); James, "The Complex of Justification: Peter Martyr Vermigli versus Albert Pighius," in *Peter Martyr Vermigli: Humanism Republicanism, Reformation*, eds. Emidio Campi, Frank A. James III, and Peter Opitz (Geneva: Droz, 2002), 45-58.

<sup>24</sup> James, "Complex of Justification," 56.

which found ground for merit in the human.<sup>25</sup> Vermigli (and this is witnessed by other Reformed theologians) consistently argued a vigorous Protestant doctrine of justification, one which makes the basis of forensic justification the imputed righteousness of Christ alone.<sup>26</sup> James underlines that this is not to say that Vermigli's doctrine did not change over time or diverge from other Protestants, but only that it was fundamentally Protestant.<sup>27</sup>

Part of the confusion on the subject of Vermigli's doctrine of justification is due to a divergence in reading the Reformation in Italy. Behind this smaller debate on Vermigli's doctrine of justification is a larger quest by historians to understand the Reformation's influence in Italy.<sup>28</sup> Indeed, the whole quest by modern historians to characterize religious reform in sixteenth-century Italy has been marked by contrasting opinions on the nature and extent of the movement loosely-called 'Evangelism.'<sup>29</sup> Although there is not a consensus about the nature and extent of this movement, there is a growing consensus as to the progression of historiography concerning this movement. Recent scholarship points to the vitality and diversity of evangelism in pre-Tridentine

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<sup>25</sup> James, "Complex of Justification," 56.

<sup>26</sup> James, "Complex of Justification," 56.

<sup>27</sup> James, "Complex of Justification," 57.

<sup>28</sup> For the literature on this subject see: John Tedeschi, ed., with James M. Lattis, *The Italian Reformation of the Sixteenth Century and the Diffusion of Renaissance Culture: A Bibliography of the Secondary Literature, Ca. 1750-1997* (Ferrara: Franco Cosimo Panini Editore, 2000).

<sup>29</sup> The terms 'evangelism' or 'evangelical' as used in this section are not to be confused with the modern usage of the terms in 'Evangelical' Protestantism.



Italy. Despite these more nuanced historiographical conclusions, the nature and extent of Italian evangelism itself still proves elusive to the historian.<sup>30</sup>

Seeing the extent and doctrine of evangelism in Italy is difficult. The movement was often by necessity very clandestine and so finding traces of it are often elusive.<sup>31</sup> Further, because of its often clandestine nature, characterising evangelism as an independent 'movement' has become more and more difficult. The Protestant movements in Germany or Switzerland have a geographical and structural definition that is lacking among the Italians. Not only is there no clear geographical relation among the various groups, there are important theological and ecclesiological differences between them.<sup>32</sup> Despite these problems most historians are willing to continue to search for a better understanding of Italian evangelism. Studying demographics, printing and individual reformers all help to paint the larger picture.<sup>33</sup>

In 1953 Eva-Maria Jung borrowed the concept of evangelism from French Reformation studies denoting a group that was neither Catholic nor Protestant in order to

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<sup>30</sup> Elizabeth Gleason, "On the Nature of Sixteenth-Century Italian Evangelism: Scholarship, 1953-1978," *Sixteenth Century Journal* 9, no. 3 (1978): 3-25; Silvana Seidel Menchi, "Italy," trans. Anne Jacobson Shutte, in *The Reformation in National Context*, eds. Bob Scribner, Roy Porter, and Mikuláš Teich (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 181-201; Anne Jacobson Shutte, "Periodization of Sixteenth-Century Italian Religious History: The Post-Cantimori Paradigm Shift," *Journal of Modern History* 61 (June 1989): 269-284; Philip McNair, "The Reformation of the Sixteenth Century in Renaissance Italy," *Religion and Humanism*, ed. Keith Robbins (Oxford: Basil Blackwell Ltd., 1981), 149-66; Salvatore Caponetto, *The Protestant Reformation in Sixteenth-Century Italy*, trans. Anne and John C. Tedeschi (Kirkville, Mo.: Thomas Jefferson University Press, 1999).

<sup>31</sup> Ugo Rozzo and Silvana Seidel Menchi, "The book and the Reformation in Italy," in *The Reformation and the Book*, ed. Jean-François Gilmont, English ed. and trans. by Karin Maag (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1998), 319.

<sup>32</sup> Paul F. Grendler, "The circulation of Protestant books in Italy," in *Peter Martyr Vermigli and Italian Reform*, ed. Joseph C. McLelland (Waterloo, On.: Sir Wilfred Laurier University Press, 1980), 5-16.

<sup>33</sup> Rozzo and Menchi, "The book in Italy," 320ff.

characterize the groups of the Italian Reformation.<sup>34</sup> Jung put forth broadly that these groups prioritized the reform of the individual and were theologically informed by a long Augustinian or Neo-Platonic tradition.<sup>35</sup> Further, these groups were generally characterized by the idea that if they wanted to purify the church, then they simply had to reform Church administration. Unfortunately, says Jung, these reform groups came too late on the scene to effect any lasting change: “In spite of all the admiration for deep piety, courage, and nobility of these reformers, we must admit that they did not realize the danger of the religious situation, that they still lived in the fatal error of expecting to reform Christianity by merely reforming Church administration, according to the principal *purga Romam, purgatur mundus*.”<sup>36</sup> The movement was, therefore, short-lived and had little lasting importance.

Besides these more general characteristics, three specific characteristics were given by Jung which have been debated by scholars since her time. First, she wrote that Italian evangelism as a movement was *undogmatic*. Generally, this means that there was no single system of doctrine shared by the Italian evangelicals. More specifically, it means that the movement didn’t share its basic tenets with either the Northern Protestant Reformers or the Counter-Reformers. On the question of faith and works, Jung stated that Evangelicals believed in “justification through faith without omission of good works.”<sup>37</sup> ‘Faith’ among the ‘Evangelicals’ did not mean “*fiducia*, not subjective

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<sup>34</sup> Jung, Eva-Maria, “On the Nature of Evangelism in Sixteenth-Century Italy,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 14 (1953): 511-27.

<sup>35</sup> Jung, “Nature of Evangelism,” 513.

<sup>36</sup> Jung, “Nature of Evangelism,” 516.

<sup>37</sup> Jung, “Nature of Evangelism,” 521.

confidence in Christ's redemption, as Luther interpreted it, but *assensus*, voluntary submission to the authority of Christ who speaks through his Church."<sup>38</sup> Above all, Jung says, the 'Evangelicals' were not interested in abolishing the sacrament of Holy Orders, transubstantiation, or the sacrifice of the mass. And although there was no fundamental dogmatic opposition to the Catholic Church, there was a shift in emphasis to a more "introverted mysticism."<sup>39</sup>

A second major characteristic of the movement was that it was *aristocratic*. The difference, points out Jung, between Italian evangelism and Protestantism is "that Evangelism did not protest."<sup>40</sup> Owing to the stress on individual piety, many of the leading evangelicals did not have large followings but had only limited contact with others. Often this contact was with individual Italian aristocrats who admired the austerity and refinement of the evangelical lifestyle. This kind of piety remained among the upper class and was not known by the average Italian. Without popular support the evangelical movement quickly died out with the death or flight of its leaders. Viewed as a whole, Jung's third main characteristic, the movement was very *transitory*, lasting a mere ten years between 1532 and 1542.<sup>41</sup>

As can be seen, Jung took the movement of evangelism to be quite limited in importance and not specifically protestant. Philip McNair took aim at Jung's thesis in his monograph *Peter Martyr in Italy*. McNair specifically treated the life of Peter Martyr

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<sup>38</sup> Jung, "Nature of Evangelism," 522.

<sup>39</sup> Jung, "Nature of Evangelism," 523.

<sup>40</sup> Jung, "Nature of Evangelism," 523.

<sup>41</sup> Jung, "Nature of Evangelism," 525.

Vermigli before his flight, but generally treated also Italian evangelism.<sup>42</sup> According to his research, Italian evangelism was far more Protestant than Jung would like us to believe. He argues that the creation of the term 'evangelism' has been used in aid of a cover-up of a particularly embarrassing phase in Roman Catholic Church history. The scholars who created and used the term were Roman Catholic and used this term as a device for explaining away an "embarrassing phase of Catholic Church history when what looks suspiciously like crypto-Lutheranism invaded the very College of Cardinals."<sup>43</sup> In opposition to this, McNair makes it very clear that it is not historically accurate to say that those traditionally placed in the movement of evangelism are simply part of a phenomenon within the Catholic Church independent of Lutheranism. To the contrary, it is quite clear, says McNair, that the Evangelicals were influenced heavily by Protestant doctrine and considered their work as an extension of the Protestant Reformation.<sup>44</sup>

McNair takes issue with Jung specifically on the point of evangelism being *undogmatic*. The term 'evangelism' is useless, he says, unless it is connected with a particular doctrine. To be *undogmatic* doesn't really say anything; it can include just about anybody trying to reform the church in 16<sup>th</sup> century Italy.<sup>45</sup> Clearly, for McNair, the evangelicals had a particular doctrine. It is clear that Ochino and Valdés, for example, had something to preach--they were not undogmatic. Further, the idea of 'justification by

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<sup>42</sup> McNair, *Peter Martyr in Italy*, ch. 1.

<sup>43</sup> McNair, *Peter Martyr in Italy*, 6. McNair even places Delio Cantimori in this group; not because he was Roman Catholic, but, presumably, because his Marxist tendencies make his scholarship just as skewed. His point, justified or not, is that this whole group worked under larger ideological influences.

<sup>44</sup> McNair, *Peter Martyr in Italy*, 48.

<sup>45</sup> McNair, *Peter Martyr in Italy*, 6.

faith' present in the Italian evangelicals was not simply from an older Paulinism, but was that of Protestants--it is clear that wherever the doctrine of 'justification by faith' took hold in Italy it was largely owing to the appearance of Protestant literature:

Wherever the doctrine of Justification by Faith took root in pre-Tridentine Italy—whether in Lucca, Modena, Naples, Padua, Venice, or Viterbo—it was preceded by Lutheran, Zwinglian, or Calvinist tracts which the timely invention of printing had disseminated far and wide. Every reformer prominent in the abortive Reformation in Italy can be shown to have read these tracts, and to have treasured them amongst his possessions.<sup>46</sup>

Contrary to Jung's thesis that Evangelism was *undogmatic* (meaning neither Protestant nor Catholic) McNair clearly makes the link with Protestantism.

Yet this is not to say that evangelism was a complete reproduction of Lutheran or Calvinist action and thought. For the time before 1542, those within the sphere of Italian evangelism did believe in justification by faith, but did not protest against the established institutions of the church. In this McNair agrees with Jung. He states that "Evangelism simply did not protest. Nor did many of its devotees trespass beyond the germinal doctrine of Justification by Faith."<sup>47</sup> For this reason he also agrees with Jung that the movement of Evangelism was transitory. As soon as those preaching the doctrine of justification by faith either died or fled, the movement died. A parallel is drawn with the progress of reform in the life of Luther at this point: "For just as there was a period in Luther's life between his assurance of the doctrine and his break with the Pope, so there was a period in the lives of these reformers when they believed that they were justified by

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<sup>46</sup> McNair, *Peter Martyr in Italy*, 8.

<sup>47</sup> McNair, *Peter Martyr in Italy*, 48.

faith but remained in communion with the See of Rome. But Dr. Jung is right to describe Evangelism as transitory.”<sup>48</sup>

Most modern scholars following McNair have been in agreement that a clear distinction between the work of Italian Evangelism and Northern Protestantism is not very tenable.<sup>49</sup> After the condemnation of Luther, Protestant ideas and especially books took on a clandestine nature in Italy. For a time some Protestant literature was printed in Italy, but very soon almost all came from the North.<sup>50</sup> The clandestine nature of this literature renders it a very difficult phenomenon to study. Nonetheless when it is possible to track the circulation of a particular book, it reflects the Protestant religious sensibilities of the owners more, and hence is more interesting to the researcher. There was a great deal of Protestant literature circulating in Italy even after some of the major Protestant-minded theologians had left. Without major figures to promote these works (which were entirely anonymous in form), several books were still circulated in high quantities.<sup>51</sup> Most significant was the *Beneficio di Christo* which, if we can believe the report, was very widely distributed. This book typifies a situation in which the preferred book was not the dense theological tome, but brief and moderate works of a practical or catechetical tendency.<sup>52</sup> Although written, presumably, by an Italian, the *Beneficio* shows great indebtedness to Protestant ideas and was thus condemned by the

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<sup>48</sup> McNair, *Peter Martyr in Italy*, 9.

<sup>49</sup> Euan Cameron, “Italy,” in *The Early Reformation in Europe*, ed. Andrew Pettegree (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 189.

<sup>50</sup> Grendler, “books in Italy,” 5ff.

<sup>51</sup> Rozzo and Menchi, “The book in Italy,” 323.

<sup>52</sup> Rozzo and Menchi, “The book in Italy,” 356.

Inquisition.<sup>53</sup> Note is also made that for the early period of Protestant activity in Italy most translations coming from abroad were from German sources, but in the later period this turned much more to Geneva. This swing in influences was probably a result of to the growing influence of the Reformed in the North, but also due to the active Italian exile communities around Geneva.<sup>54</sup>

Prior to 1542, then, Protestant-minded clerics in Italy had much opportunity to read and reflect on Protestant ideas. Many remained attached to Rome, but yet advocated the doctrine of justification by faith alone.<sup>55</sup> Many of these Italian Evangelicals were intrigued by the symmetry of the Protestant position:

It is significant that expressions of an aesthetic character recur frequently in the lexicon of philo-Protestant preachers and their listeners: the works and doctrines of the heretics struck them as 'beautiful' or 'eloquent' even before they endorsed them as 'true.' The beauty of the Reformation theology consisted above all in the boldness of its dialectic. Grace/merit, flesh/spirit, spirit/letter, Gospel/Human traditions, justice/mercy: these are the great themes of systematic theology which underlay Italian philo-Protestant preaching during these two decades.<sup>56</sup>

When the inquisition and Catholic hierarchy began to organize against these preachers many of them fled north and others became what Calvin would later call 'Nicodemites.'<sup>57</sup>

Other figures such as Juan de Valdés are more clearly influenced by certain Protestant

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<sup>53</sup> See the introduction and translation of the "Beneficio di Christo," in *Reform Thought in Sixteenth-Century Italy*, ed. Elisabeth G. Gleason (The American Academy of Religion, 1981), 103-161; Benedetto Da Mantova, *Il Beneficio Di Christo*, ed. Salvatore Caponetto (Firenze: G.C. Sansoni Editore, 1972).

<sup>54</sup> Rozzo and Menchi, "The book in Italy," 338-339.

<sup>55</sup> James, "*De Justificatione*," 131 ff.

<sup>56</sup> Menchi, "Italy," 188.

<sup>57</sup> Timothy George, "Nicodemism," in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Reformation*, ed. Hans Hillerbrand (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996); Menchi, "Italy," 194; Carter Lindberg, *The European Reformations* (Malden, Mass.: Blackwell Publishers, 1996), 341.

teachings, but yet unaffected by others.<sup>58</sup> It is difficult to know with certainty what the individuals who fled Italy for the North knew *before* they fled north to join forces with the Northern Reformers, but in the case of Peter Martyr it is clear that at least on the doctrine of justification he was fundamentally Protestant, yet did not formally ‘protest’ until his flight.<sup>59</sup>

### **B. Vermigli: Humanist or Scholastic?**

In the last several centuries of protestant historical scholarship few movements of Church history have been so severely criticized or overtly neglected as those bearing the name ‘scholastic.’ The eras in which scholastic theology was seen as the dominate theology were seen by many historians as an alien imposition on the vibrant dynamism of the early church and, subsequently, in opposition to the dynamism of the early Reformation. Medieval scholasticism was seen to have its beginnings with Peter Lombard’s *Sentences*, its height with Thomas Aquinas and its demise in the late-medieval scholastics such as William Occam and Gabriel Biel.<sup>60</sup> Providentially, in the opinion of these historians, the 16<sup>th</sup> century brought some critical of scholasticism such as Martin Luther and John Calvin. Luther and Calvin’s thought appeared like a bolt of lightning—an abolition of rationalistic thought and theological structure of the middle ages and a return to the pure structures and sources of biblical thought. Unfortunately,

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<sup>58</sup> Caponetto, *Protestant Reformation in Italy*, 64.

<sup>59</sup> Frank A. James III, “Introduction: *Nunc Peregrinus Oberrat: Peter Martyr in Context*,” in his *Peter Martyr Vermigli and the European Reformations: Semper Reformanda* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), xvi.

<sup>60</sup> See Heiko Oberman’s critique of this view: *Forerunners of the Reformation: The Shape of Late Medieval Thought* (New York : Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1966), 1-50; Oberman, *The Harvest of Medieval Theology* (Grand Rapids, Baker, 2000).



not even these theologians' super-human efforts could stop the re-imposition of the scholasticism in the thought of these Reformation theologians' disciples.<sup>61</sup>

In this view, scholasticism can be already seen in the thought of Luther and Calvin's immediate successors.<sup>62</sup> A so-called 'slide' into scholasticism continued for the next century and a half. Scholasticism thus stood in stark contrast to the dynamism of the earlier Reformation.<sup>63</sup> Protestant Scholasticism was characterized by a centrality of Aristotle, metaphysics and predestination.<sup>64</sup> Under these as guiding principles biblical religion was eclipsed and a period of dead orthodoxy and rancorous theological hair-splitting reigned. By the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century the inheritors of this system slid simply into an unabashed rationalism or, in stark reaction, promoted Pietistic forms of religion free of rationalizing scholastic baggage. Neither alternative was satisfactory; both were the children of the unfortunate Scholastics.<sup>65</sup>

Many major Protestant thinkers doing historical theology in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries wrote in this vein of scholarship.<sup>66</sup> Yet for the last several decades a major revision of this approach to the history of theological thought has been under way. A

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<sup>61</sup> Among others: Basil Hall, "Calvin against the Calvinists," in *John Calvin*, ed. G. E. Duffield (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1966), 19-37; Stephen Strehle, *The Catholic Roots of the Protestant Gospel: Encounters between the Middle Ages and the Reformation* (Leiden: Brill, 1995), 40, 93 and 125; Green, "Luther's Understanding," 49ff.

<sup>62</sup> Hall, "Calvin against Calvinists," 19ff; Alister McGrath, *Reformation Thought: An Introduction*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1993), 129-131.

<sup>63</sup> Willem J. van Asselt and Eef Dekker. "Introduction," in *Reformation and Scholasticism: An Ecumenical Enterprise*, eds. Willem J. van Asselt and Eef Dekker (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001), 11.

<sup>64</sup> Brian Armstrong, *Calvinism and the Amyraut Heresy: Protestant Scholasticism and Humanism in Seventeenth Century France* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1969), 32.

<sup>65</sup> John Leith, *Introduction to the Reformed Tradition* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1981), 117ff.

<sup>66</sup> For a review of this literature see: Van Asselt and Dekker, *Reformation and Scholasticism*, 14ff.; Carl R. Trueman and R. Scott Clark, eds., *Protestant Scholasticism: Essays in Reassessment* (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 1999), xi ff.

revisionist line of thinking seeks to place scholasticism in its proper historical situation.<sup>67</sup> The central discovery is that the early church, medieval scholasticism, the early reformation and subsequent protestant scholasticism have much more foundational continuity than discontinuity.<sup>68</sup> Further, an important claim in the new scholarship is that the older historians wrote from a misleading definition of 'scholasticism.'<sup>69</sup> Armstrong's definition of scholasticism as the use of Aristotelian philosophy, a pronounced metaphysical interest, and the use of predestination as an organizing principle in one's theological system might perhaps be partially true for a few theologians in this period, but the vast majority normally considered 'scholastic' could not be made to fit into these categories.<sup>70</sup> Scholasticism should not be defined by its content at all, but by its

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<sup>67</sup> Richard Muller's comments on the subject make the contrast clear: "When we move past the problems of central dogmas, *principia*, and the method of this theology to the issue of its actual sources, we come to a conclusion similar to those reached in the other just mentioned revisionist analyses: simply stated, the Reformed orthodoxy theology of the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries is far too rich and variegated in its sources and in their use to oblige the rather simplistic and often reductionistic claims of the modern theological critics—namely, that it is dry, rigid, dead, deductive, speculative, metaphysical, decretal, predestinarian, legalistic, Aristotelian, biblicistic, proof-texting, rationalistic, and philosophical. The underlying point of the reappraisal of this theology has been and must continue to be the removal of modern theological grids from the analysis of historical materials and the examination of those materials in terms of their own historical antecedents and context." *Ad Fontes Argumentorum: The Sources of Reformed Theology in the 17<sup>th</sup> Century*. Belle van Zuylenleerssoel Inaugural Address, delivered 11 May, 1999, Universiteit Utrecht. *Utrechtse Theologische Reeks*, deel 40 (Utrecht: Faculteit der Godgeleerdheid, 1999), 8.

<sup>68</sup> Richard A. Muller, "Calvin and the 'Calvinists': Assessing Continuities and Discontinuities between the Reformation and Orthodoxy," *Calvin Theological Journal* 30 (1995) 345-75 and 31 (1996) 125-60.

<sup>69</sup> Brian Armstrong continues to defend his definition of 'scholasticism' in a more recent essay: Brian Armstrong, "The Changing Face of French Protestantism: The Influence of Pierre Du Moulin," in *Calviniana: Ideas and Influence of Jean Calvin*, ed. Robert V. Schnucker (Kirksville, Mo.: Sixteenth Century Journal Publishers, 1988), 145 n. 44 and 146 n. 45.

<sup>70</sup> Along with Armstrong see also Jack Rogers and Donald McKim, *The Authority and Interpretation of the Bible: An Historical Approach* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1979), esp. 150-55; McGrath, *Reformation Thought*, 130.

method.<sup>71</sup> *Scholastic* theology in its basic sense is just that, namely theology formulated and taught in the *schools*.<sup>72</sup> There was no standard use of Aristotle (or philosophy for that matter),<sup>73</sup> no standard pronounced metaphysical interest, and predestination was surely not the organizing principle of the vast majority (if any) of these thinkers.<sup>74</sup> More appropriately ‘scholasticism’ is a school theology developed on a “highly technical level and in an extremely precise manner by means of the careful identification of topics, division of these topics into their basic parts, definition of these parts, and doctrinal or logical argumentation concerning divisions and definitions.”<sup>75</sup> Although this general method was shared, it often generated very different results and, therefore, very different content. Often, then, when scholasticism was critiqued by theologians in this period, it was not because it was scholasticism *per se*, but because it was *bad* scholasticism (i.e. the

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<sup>71</sup> C.B. Schmitt, “Towards a Reassessment of Renaissance Aristotelianism,” in his *Studies in Renaissance Philosophy and Science* (London: Variorum Reprints, 1981), VI, 160-61; Richard Muller, *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics*, Vol. 1. Prolegomena to Theology, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Grand Rapids : Baker, 2003) 34ff.

<sup>72</sup> W.J. van Asselt *et al.*, *Inleiding in de Gereformeerde Scholastiek* (Zoetermeer: Boekencentrum, 1998), 14-17.

<sup>73</sup> See Joseph S. Freedman, “Aristotle and the Content of Philosophy Instruction at Central European Schools and Universities during the Reformation Era (1500-1650),” in his *Philosophy and the Arts in Central Europe, 1500-1700: Teachings and Texts at Schools and Universities* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999), Ch. V. Freedman argues: “It is very difficult—if at all possible—to maintain that there is an ‘Aristotelian’ position with regard to the classification of philosophical disciplines in Central Europe during the Reformation Era. It remains to be demonstrated that there is any philosophical concept discussed during the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries with respect to which there is a uniform ‘Aristotelian’ view.” V 234; See also: Norman Klassen, “Nature, Virtue, and Humanism: Cross-Disciplinary Reflections on Vermigli’s Romans Commentary (10-16),” in *Peter Martyr Vermigli and the European Reformations: Semper Reformanda*, ed. Frank A. James III (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 197-212.

<sup>74</sup> Trueman and Clark, *Protestant Scholasticism*, xiv.

<sup>75</sup> Muller, *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics*, Vol. 1, 34.

conclusions of its system did not reflect its method or its method was corrupt in some way).<sup>76</sup>

Such was true for the use of philosophy and, especially, the reference to Aristotelian principles in the Reformation period. In Vermigli studies this debate has been fairly vigorous. Vermigli is one of the major Reformed theologians of the 16<sup>th</sup> century to use Aristotelian categories and logic a great deal. Hence, when the older scholarship looked at Vermigli, it tended to view him as a theologian who unhitched the doctrinal cart from the biblical reformation only to re-hitch it to philosophical speculation. McLelland writes that by this understanding “Martyr was cast in the role of secondary supporter of John Calvin, even one who surrendered the biblical heartland of Calvinism to scholastic method and spirit.”<sup>77</sup> Indeed, Vermigli stooped so low, in this narrow view, as to comment on Aristotle’s *Ethics*.<sup>78</sup> It is easy to see, then, how Vermigli’s speculative philosophical bent could be set up against a biblically based humanism.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> Muller is clear that these theologians wanted to be good thinkers, not good Aristotelians: “If, on the other hand, Aristotelianism is defined as a view of the universe that affirms both a primary and a secondary causality, that assumes the working of first and final causality through the means of instrumental, formal, and material causes, and that, using this paradigm, can explain various levels of necessary and contingent existence, then a large number of Aristotelians appear on the horizon. Thus, applied strictly, the term ‘Aristotelian’ can be used to exclude from the category many of the thinkers typically classified as Aristotelians, notably, Thomas Aquinas, Cardinal Cajetan, Francis Suarez, and all of the Reformed scholastics. On the other hand, applied loosely, the term will define the thought of numerous thinkers, all of whom denied or radically modified tenets central to Aristotle’s own thought.” Muller, *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics*, vol. 1, 367.

<sup>77</sup> Joseph C. McLelland, “Peter Martyr Vermigli: scholastic or humanist?” in his *Peter Martyr Vermigli and Italian Reform* (Waterloo, On.: Sir Wilfred Laurier University Press, 1980), 143.

<sup>78</sup> *In Primum, Secundum, et Initium Tertii Libri ethicorum Aristotelis ad Nicomachum* (Zurich: C. Froschauer, 1563); The fine Peter Martyr Library edition has recently appeared: *Commentary on Aristotle’s Nicomachean Ethics*, eds. Emidio Campi and Joseph C. McLelland, PML Vol. 9 (Kirkville, Mo.: Truman State University Press, 2006).

<sup>79</sup> McLelland is aware of the historiographic problem: “In Martyr’s case the question becomes: by what definition of ‘scholasticism’ do we consider him a negative development of Calvin’s theology? And just here I submit that the ground has been spoiled by generations of Protestant polemicists (not to mention their opponents who granted one premise of debate) who insisted that the medieval Aristotelian-Thomist

Much of the dispute in Vermigli studies was largely owing to inadequate definitions of both 'scholasticism' and 'humanism'. When scholasticism is defined as a speculative, Aristotelian, predestinarian system it certainly conflicts with a humanism defined as text-oriented, philological and guarded in its use of metaphysics. Thus defined, any sort of 'scholasticism' and 'humanism' would be at odds with each other. At a Vermigli colloquium in 1977 this is precisely the battle that ensued.<sup>80</sup> Marvin Anderson launched the opening salvo by positing that however much Vermigli knew the scholastic theologians by training, he was not a scholastic by practice.<sup>81</sup> Such an argument was clearly directed against Donnelly and those who tended to read a more speculative scholasticism into Vermigli. Anderson specifically notes that Vermigli's express purpose was to expound Scripture and not Aristotelian metaphysics.<sup>82</sup> Martyr should be taken seriously when he cautions against the excessive use of reason in the formulation of theology. Like Tertullian, Martyr sees the difficulties of mixing Athens and Jerusalem.<sup>83</sup>

Much of Anderson's critique was against the work of John Patrick Donnelly who in his major 1976 monograph *Calvinism and Scholasticism in Vermigli's Doctrine of Man and Grace* and subsequent articles on Vermigli had cast Vermigli in more of a

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synthesis was the ruin of Christian theology, and that the Reformation began afresh with biblical sources, Calvin especially its faithful prototype." McLelland, "Peter Martyr Vermigli: scholastic or humanist?" 148.

<sup>80</sup> The conference notes were edited by Joseph McLelland as: *Peter Martyr Vermigli and Italian Reform* (Waterloo, On.: Wilfred Laurier University Press, 1980).

<sup>81</sup> Marvin W. Anderson, "Peter Martyr Vermigli: Protestant humanist," in *Peter Martyr Vermigli and Italian Reform*, ed. Joseph C. McLelland (Waterloo, ON: Sir Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1980), 66.

<sup>82</sup> Anderson, "Peter Martyr Vermigli: Protestant humanist," 83.

<sup>83</sup> Anderson, "Peter Martyr Vermigli: Protestant humanist," 84.

scholastic light.<sup>84</sup> In these Donnelly linked Thomas Aquinas to Vermigli (thus seeing an important link between the *via antiqua* and the Protestant Reformers) and linked Vermigli to the later Reformed Scholastics.<sup>85</sup> While the link between Vermigli and Thomas Aquinas has been largely appreciated,<sup>86</sup> the link with the later Reformed Scholastics was based on a general acceptance of Brian Armstrong's definition of Protestant Scholasticism.<sup>87</sup> Donnelly certainly notes that scholasticism is better defined as a general method than a particular content, yet Vermigli is certainly one of the transitional figures on the way to full-blown 17<sup>th</sup> century Reformed Scholasticism.<sup>88</sup>

Joseph McLelland added his moderating voice to the debate, a voice which has become largely accepted by Vermigli scholars today, that to place scholasticism and humanism at odds in Vermigli would be to betray everything that Vermigli says about himself.<sup>89</sup> Vermigli was very comfortable using the tools of both humanism and scholasticism. Both methodological approaches were viewed as tools for his overall

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<sup>84</sup> Donnelly, *Calvinism and Scholasticism*; Donnelly, "Calvinist Thomism," *Viator* 7 (1976): 441-455; Donnelly, "Italian influences on the development of Calvinist scholasticism," *Sixteenth Century Journal* 7 (1976): 81-101 (reprinted in R.C. Gamble, ed. *Calvin and Calvinism*, vol. 13).

<sup>85</sup> Donnelly, *Calvinism and Scholasticism*, 201.

<sup>86</sup> For example: Donald Fuller, "Sacrifice and Sacrament: Another Eucharistic Contribution from Peter Martyr Vermigli," in *Peter Martyr Vermigli and the European Reformations: Semper Reformanda*, ed. Frank A. James III (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 215-237; See also James, "De Justificatione," 55; For an interesting example of Vermigli's use and critique of Thomas see *DIAL*, 89. Vermigli's character says almost exactly a fundamental Thomist principle against a Thomist argument. He argues that grace perfects nature, but does not destroy it. [Ratio est in promptu. Quoniam vires & facultates, quas recensuisti, non destruunt naturam humanam, sed perficiūt. Humanitatem verò deitati coextendi fieri non potest, nisi ea quoque infinita reddatur: quod nil est aliud, quā illam extinguere.]

<sup>87</sup> Donnelly, *Calvinism and Scholasticism*, 8.

<sup>88</sup> Donnelly, *Calvinism and Scholasticism*, 197 and 201. ,

<sup>89</sup> McLelland, "Peter Martyr Vermigli: scholastic or humanist?" 143; McLelland, "Calvinism perfecting Thomism: Peter Martyr Vermigli's question," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 31, no. 6 (1978): 571-578.

theological plan of bringing glory to God.<sup>90</sup> McLelland notes that Vermigli often used Thomistic tools, but to call him a 'Calvinist Thomist' is to go too far. In any case, a facile either/or question of scholasticism and humanism does not help in characterizing Vermigli's theological method or presuppositions.<sup>91</sup> McLelland's mediating position on the subject has generally carried the day in Vermigli studies.<sup>92</sup> Frank James has frequently noted that Vermigli's scholasticism and humanism abide side by side.<sup>93</sup> James writes of Vermigli's method: "One sees in Vermigli's hermeneutic this new combination of elements of the old methodology joined with a new philological orientation and infused with a new theological motive. Thus Vermigli's method of biblical interpretation was not so much a rejection of scholastic methodology as a reconfiguration of scholastic and humanist approaches in the service of new theological convictions."<sup>94</sup> Others have noted that the radical distinction made by some reformers between scholasticism and humanism should not be immediately applicable for all reformers. Vermigli, among others, was living proof that the two could live together.<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> McLelland, "Peter Martyr Vermigli: scholastic or humanist?" 148.

<sup>91</sup> McLelland, "Peter Martyr Vermigli: scholastic or humanist?" 148; See also Joseph S. Freedman, "Aristotelianism and Humanism in the Late Reformation, German Philosophy: The Case of Climens Timpler," in *The Harvest of Humanism in Central Europe: Essays in Honor of Lewis W. Spitz*, ed. Manfred P. Fleischer (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1992), 219.

<sup>92</sup> See McLelland's more recent comments in the "Introduction" to *ANE*, xxvi-xxx.

<sup>93</sup> James, "De justificatione," 61ff.; James, "Peter Martyr Vermigli: At the Crossroads," 62-78; James, "Vermigli, Peter Martyr (1499-1562)," in *Historical Handbook of Major Biblical Interpreters*, ed. Donald McKim (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1998), 239-245.

<sup>94</sup> James, "Vermigli, Peter Martyr," 243.

<sup>95</sup> John L. Farthing, "*Praeceptor Carissimus*: Images of Peter Martyr Vermigli in Girolamo Zanchi's Correspondence," in *Peter Martyr Vermigli and the European Reformations: Semper Reformanda*, ed. Frank A. James III (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 3-25.

### C. Vermigli: What kind of Augustinian?

Vermigli showed a tremendous interest in the Church Fathers, above all in Augustine. Augustine was unquestionably Vermigli's favourite theologian.<sup>96</sup> Indeed, going through his *Romans* commentary, for example, one sees Augustine's thought on the great majority of pages.<sup>97</sup> It is owing to such frequent references that Frank James argues Augustine's influence to be greater than that of either scholasticism or humanism on Vermigli. Although James will argue that the Augustinianism of Vermigli is mediated through the late-medieval Gregory of Rimini, it is nonetheless a vital Augustinianism.<sup>98</sup> Indeed, although implicitly reading predestination with Gregory and the *Schola Augustiniana moderna*, Vermigli explicitly refers most often to Augustine.<sup>99</sup> James confidently notes: "Theologically Augustine is Vermigli's guiding light."<sup>100</sup>

There can be no doubt that Vermigli held Augustine in the highest esteem. Many have, however, cautioned against the use of a blanket Augustinianism to characterize Vermigli. Even James, for example, modifies the kind of Augustinianism that Vermigli professes. It is not simply enough to say that Vermigli is Augustinian, but James has argued that he is an 'intensified Augustinian.'<sup>101</sup> Further, James is referring to the specific case of Vermigli's absorption of the distinctive doctrine of *gemina*

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<sup>96</sup> Donnelly, *Calvinism and Scholasticism*, 35.

<sup>97</sup> For example: *ROM*, 2r, 5v, 8r, 8v, 10r, etc.

<sup>98</sup> Such is the major thesis of James' *Peter Martyr Vermigli and predestination: the Augustinian inheritance of an Italian reformer* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999).

<sup>99</sup> James, "Vermigli, Peter Martyr," 242.

<sup>100</sup> James, "Vermigli, Peter Martyr," 242.

<sup>101</sup> James, "Peter Martyr Vermigli: At the Crossroads," 73.



*praedestinatio*.<sup>102</sup> On other doctrines, Vermigli is much more guarded in his comments on Augustine, if not in outright disagreement.<sup>103</sup> In any case, it is clear that further inquiry into Vermigli's Augustinianism will be necessary. The present essay will not attempt to place Vermigli in any one of the many schools of Augustinianism (indeed, it is arguable that every major western Christian theologian of the period would admit to being Augustinian at least to some degree<sup>104</sup>), but rather to show how Vermigli is indebted to the bishop of Hippo in certain specific theological and hermeneutical concerns.

Yet, going beyond Augustine, the present study will also show that Vermigli is generally indebted to all the Church Fathers. Certainly he is more critical of Ambrose, Chrysostom or Basil, but they also often serve as authorities for his arguments. Moreover, he takes the first four general councils—especially in regard to Trinitarian or Christological doctrine—as doctrinally authoritative. Augustine is undoubtedly primary, but is one of many patristic authorities cited by Vermigli. The rest of the patristic world sometimes gets lost in the shuffle when the debate is focused on Aristotle, Augustine and Aquinas.

#### **D. Vermigli: Calvinist or Reformed?**

Because of Calvin's huge stature in the theological debates of the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries and beyond, it became common to refer to Reformed theology as 'Calvinism.'

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<sup>102</sup> James, "Peter Martyr Vermigli: At the Crossroads," 73.

<sup>103</sup> For example: *ROM*, 112r.

<sup>104</sup> See David Steinmetz, *Luther and Staupitz* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1980), 13-16; Irena Backus, *Historical Method and Confessional Identity in the Era of the Reformation (1378-1615)* (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 7.

This term is most often used loosely to designate the doctrinal allies of Calvin, but it becomes problematic when speaking of Calvin's contemporaries. For example, Anderson writes: "Through a careful study of Martyr's correspondence with Bullinger and Calvin one can see the stature which Peter Martyr had among these leaders of Reformed Theology. It would be wrong to label him Zwinglian, and premature to make out Martyr as a Calvinist."<sup>105</sup> Such labelling, however, is unhelpful for it makes of Vermigli one half-formed, as one bright enough to see the errors of Zwingli, but not quite bright enough to follow Calvin. To see Calvin as *the* standard of Reformed theology is to forget that the Reformed theologians of the 16<sup>th</sup> century were much more collegial and less organized than our collected and bound textbooks on the history of the Reformation would have us realize.<sup>106</sup> Donnelly notes the collegiality of the Reformed theologians rightly:

But to designate this complex movement *Calvinism* obscures almost as much as it illuminates. It implies a series of master-disciple relationships and a unity of doctrine and direction deriving from Calvin that disappear under close examination. The reality was rather a group of like-minded theologians and church leaders linked by personal contact and correspondence, by common ideals and uncommon energy, and above all by a broad doctrinal consensus, though differing in details."<sup>107</sup>

Vermigli was certainly Reformed, but was never, nor did he ever aspire to be a 'Calvinist.'

This lack of master-disciple relationship of Vermigli to Calvin was addressed early in Vermigli studies. In an appendix to his *Visible Words of God*, McLelland clearly

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<sup>105</sup> Anderson, *Peter Martyr, a Reformer in Exile*, 380.

<sup>106</sup> See Cristoph Strohm, "Methodology in Discussion of 'Calvin and Calvinism'," in *Calvinus Praeceptor Ecclesiae*. ed. Herman J. Selderhuis (Geneva: Droz, 2004), 65-106; Van Asselt and Dekker, *Reformation and Scholasticism*, 13; James, "Vermigli, Peter Martyr," 244.

<sup>107</sup> Donnelly, *Calvinism and Scholasticism*, 2.

showed the Vermigli's independence of Calvin.<sup>108</sup> Both men wrote on similar subjects at similar times, but Vermigli can not be seen to be any sort of disciple of Calvin.

McLelland argued, and scholarship since that time has backed this claim, that Vermigli actually had much stronger relationships with other leading reformers. Of any reformer, Bucer seems to have had the most formative personal influence on Vermigli.<sup>109</sup> Vermigli not only read Bucer before fleeing north, but also had a great deal of personal contact with Bucer after his arrival. Even though Vermigli would be critical of Bucer's doctrine of the Lord's Supper, he always remained on good terms with Bucer.<sup>110</sup> Further, Vermigli had great confidence in several of the English reformers such as Cranmer and Jewel.<sup>111</sup> Finally, Vermigli worked very closely with Heinrich Bullinger in Zurich. Particularly on questions of political theology, Vermigli was certainly closer to Bullinger than to Calvin.<sup>112</sup>

Broadly speaking, Vermigli was an independent thinker. He was not greatly original (actually he shunned 'originality' in theology as tantamount to heresy), but, as Donnelly notes, he had "a unified, personal view of the thought and writings of several

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<sup>108</sup> McLelland, "Appendix C: Bucer, Calvin and Martyr," in his *Visible Words of God*, 272-281.

<sup>109</sup> McLelland, *Visible Words of God*, 272.

<sup>110</sup> McLelland, *Visible Words of God*, 276ff.

<sup>111</sup> See Diarmaid MacCulloch, "Peter Martyr and Thomas Cranmer," in *Peter Martyr Vermigli: Humanism Republicanism, Reformation*, eds. Emidio Campi, Frank A. James III, and Peter Opitz (Geneva: Droz, 2002), 173-202; Philip McNair, "Peter Martyr in England," in *Peter Martyr Vermigli and Italian Reform*, ed. Joseph C. McLelland (Waterloo, On.: Sir Wilfred Laurier University Press, 1980), 85-105; Gary Jenkins, "Peter Martyr and the Church of England after 1558," *Peter Martyr Vermigli and the European Reformations: Semper Reformanda*, ed. Frank A. James III (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 47-69.

<sup>112</sup> Torrance Kirby, "Peter Martyr Vermigli and Pope Boniface VIII: the Difference Between Civil and Ecclesiastical Power," in *Peter Martyr Vermigli and the European Reformations: Semper Reformanda*, ed. Frank A. James III (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 303; Kirby, "'Relics of the Amorites' or 'Things Indifferent'?" *Peter Martyr Vermigli's Authority and the Threat of Schism in the Elizabethan Vestarian Controversy*, *Reformation and Renaissance Review* 6, no. 3 (2004): 325.

intellectual traditions that reached back centuries and even millennia.”<sup>113</sup> As far as his influences are concerned, he was more of an eclectic thinker; a man who could happily borrow wisdom wherever it might be found. Further, he was not pushed doggedly by a ‘central dogma’ of sorts.<sup>114</sup> It is possible to see influences from many seemingly disparate (from a 21<sup>st</sup> century point of view) theological camps.<sup>115</sup> As such, he was certainly no blind follower of another great Reformer, yet thoroughly and vitally Reformed.<sup>116</sup>

All this is not to say, however, that Vermigli and Calvin were at odds theologically. Vermigli and Calvin seemed to have a good epistolary relationship and participated on the same side in many theological debates. Perhaps most interesting for the historian of theology is that Vermigli and Calvin shared such opinions collegially. Certain nuances in their arguments are clearly different, yet the overall message is very similar. On Christology or the Eucharist, for example, they differ on the details and on

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<sup>113</sup> Donnelly, *Calvinism and Scholasticism*, 3.

<sup>114</sup> On the ‘central dogma’ thesis in Calvin see: Muller, *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics*, vol. 1, 123ff.; Muller, *Christ and the Decree: Christology and Predestination in Reformed Theology from Calvin to Perkins*. (Durham, North Carolina: The Labyrinth Press, 1986), 1-13; François Wendel, *Calvin: Sources et Évolution de sa Pensée Religieuse* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1950), 273-75.

<sup>115</sup> “Martyr’s mature position reflects much of his earlier Valdésian spirituality. Caught between the polemics of sacramental means as either absolutely necessary or else indifferent, he attempted a compromise that often suited neither side. Bucer suspected him of being soft on Zwinglianism, Bullinger on Calvinism. But his voluminous writings on the sacraments profile the man, for they reflect the spirit of Plato, the categories of Aristotle, the piety of Valdés, and the biblical narrative he expounded so well. Such was the dense web of his discourse about God’s visible words.” Joseph McLelland, “Valdés and Vermigli: Spirituality and Degrees of Reform,” in *Vermigli and the European Reformations*, 246.

<sup>116</sup> Many have noted the ‘eclectic’ nature of the theologians of the Reformation. Any sixteenth-century theologian who was well-trained would certainly not have followed another simply for the sake of following. On Vermigli see: Simler, in *LLS*, 29-30; on Richard Hooker: Torrance Kirby, *Richard Hooker’s Doctrine of the Royal Supremacy* (Leiden: Brill, 1990); on Calvin: Kilian McDonnell, OSB, *John Calvin, the Church, and the Eucharist* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967); Wendel, *Calvin*, 273.

how they arrive at their conclusions, but, indeed, the conclusions are quite strikingly similar.<sup>117</sup>

### III. Conclusion

The background of our study is now before us. In examining Vermigli's thought one notes that it is not easy to place Vermigli in any particular camp with any specific doctrine. Vermigli was far too learned to be easily pigeon-holed. His writings, even though less well-known than other reformers, are still being translated and studied. Outbursts of emotion or surprising ideas are certainly rare in his thought, yet the student of Vermigli should not therefore pretend that his thought is easy to grasp.

The present essay seeks to further scholarship on Vermigli through an examination of his thought on the outward instruments of salvation. These are the earthly instruments that God uses to effect his grace. God's reveals his grace in his 'Word'—such Word *incarnate* in his Son, *audible* in Scripture, and *visible* in the sacraments. For Vermigli all three are to be understood neither in some over-carnalized sense, nor in some over-spiritualized sense. Rather each must be understood in its proper sense. This is a delicate task for the theologian. Vermigli typically thought in his theologizing to be a man in the middle; not someone who bent theological words so as to be pleasing to all sides, but one who carefully defined and explicated the Word of God as far as possible to represent true Christianity. Whether or not he was successful is a debate for the Christians of the 16<sup>th</sup> or 21<sup>st</sup> centuries; yet that he attempted to do so is clear throughout his writings.

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<sup>117</sup> Corda, *Veritas Sacramenti*, 190

## CHAPTER II

### Historical Introduction: Over-Carnalized and Over-Spiritualized Religion

#### I. Introduction

Vermigli did not engage in theological reflection or biblical exegesis in a vacuum: he was very conversant with the tradition between his own time and that of Scripture. Although, on the one hand, his application of Scripture gave the appearance of minimizing the authority of tradition<sup>1</sup>, it is clear, on the other, from the numerous references and nuanced theological ideas that he was greatly aware of and deeply indebted to patristic and medieval theology. Vermigli certainly evidences great knowledge of that history throughout his letters and books. Such was not simply a passive knowledge of names and facts, but a well-digested and critical knowledge of Christian history until his time. When he began to teach Scripture openly as a Protestant after his flight from Italy in 1542, he evidenced a clear and incisive reading of history.<sup>2</sup>

From the beginning Vermigli sought to position himself between the various poles of thought on the fundamental questions of the day. Neither completely rejecting nor completely accepting the theological stance of either end of these poles, Vermigli sought to uphold what was right and reject what was wrong in each. Such is certainly true in his understanding of the place of the outward elements in Christian worship.

Vermigli was careful not to over-carnalize religion nor, conversely, to over-spiritualize

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<sup>1</sup> "Auch die Differenz zwischen der Lebenswelt der biblischen Schriftsteller und der Lebenswelt heutiger Ausleger wird von ihm [Vermigli] zu wenig akzentuiert." Thomas Krüger, "Vermigli's Hermeneutik des Alten Testaments Am Beispiel Seines Kommentars über die Königsbücher," in *Peter Martyr Vermigli : humanism, republicanism, reformation*, eds. Emidio Campi, Frank A. James III, and Peter Opitz (Geneva: Droz, 2002), 231.

<sup>2</sup> See Vermigli's "Plain Exposition of the Twelve Articles," *EW*, 27ff.

it.<sup>3</sup> Admittedly, the theological landscape of the late-middle ages and Reformation (not to mention the modern period) was much more varied than such a dichotomy would suggest, yet nonetheless these two poles of thought were very important for Vermigli's theologizing.

An over-carnalized religion, according to Vermigli, makes of the outward element into an idol. It takes any external instrument or visible sign and cuts it off from its spiritual power. Hence, religion becomes ritualized and the action itself of religion becomes the ultimate giver of grace *ex opere operato*. On the other hand, an over-spiritualized religion for Vermigli renders the outward element spiritually useless. Certainly the outward elements might still have a peripheral place, but for the spiritually mature they become mere matters of indifference (*adiaphora*). Between these two poles Vermigli seeks to define the golden mean: he takes what is important from each and rejects what is excessive.

## II. Over-Carnalized Religion

Vermigli has a great deal to say about a religion that he thought had become a ritual of unconscious actions to perform which are thought to be imbued with power. Certainly, this was not the express wish of the medieval theologians characteristic of this position. They did not seek to destroy the Christian religion, but rather to express it faithfully. Nonetheless, in the eyes of the Vermigli this over-carnalized extreme caused great harm and could not longer be followed.

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<sup>3</sup> For an understanding of the terms 'carnality' and 'spirituality' in Vermigli's thought see the preface above.

### A. Pseudo-Dionysius and Neo-Platonic Theurgy

Most exemplary of this over-carnalized religion for Vermigli was the thought of the neo-Platonic Pseudo-Dionysius.<sup>4</sup> Karlfried Froehlich interestingly notes the importance of Dionysius in the late-medieval period: “Except for the Bible and perhaps the works of Boethius, no writing of the early Christian era received similar attention in terms of translations, excerpts, commentaries, and even cumulative corpora that combined these elements into veritable encyclopaedias of Dionysian scholarship.”<sup>5</sup> Although discredited as being from *the* Dionysius of Acts 17:34 by Lorenzo Valla, Dionysian spirituality continued to be extremely important in the Reformation period.<sup>6</sup> Valla’s thought on this subject became widely known through a critical note by Erasmus in his famous Greek New Testament in 1516.<sup>7</sup> Nonetheless, many of the most important humanists continued to argue the merits of Dionysian thought despite the mounting pressure against his apostolic status.<sup>8</sup>

Vermigli certainly knew the Dionysian writings, but shared the conviction of many of the Reformers that the neo-Platonic Dionysius was not the Dionysius of Acts 17. Vermigli writes that those who have the greatest judgment in the ascribing of books to

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<sup>4</sup> Donnelly, *Calvinism and Scholasticism*, 29; Kirby, “Peter Martyr Vermigli and Boniface,” 297-299.

<sup>5</sup> Karlfried Froehlich, “Pseudo-Dionysius and the Reformation of the Sixteenth Century,” in *Pseudo-Dionysius: The Complete Works*, trans. and ed. Paul Rorem and Colm Luibheid (New York: Paulist Press, 1987), 33.

<sup>6</sup> Froehlich, “Pseudo-Dionysius,” 34.

<sup>7</sup> Froehlich, “Pseudo-Dionysius,” 39.

<sup>8</sup> For example, John Colet continued to use Dionysius despite his friend William Grocyn’s lectures discrediting his apostolic status. John B. Gleason, *John Colet* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 200 and 270ff.



their true authors (presumably other humanists like Erasmus) do not ascribe the Pseudo-Dionysian works to the apostolic period.<sup>9</sup> Most significantly, however, Vermigli is critical of the substantive theology of the Pseudo-Dionysian writings. Speaking of the division of heavenly beings which mediate grace, Vermigli writes that Dionysius has said much extra information concerning the signification of the words 'principalities, powers and dominions' of Pauline thought, yet such things are only found in him. Among the rest of the Fathers, says Vermigli, there is very little in the way of speculation about these angelic divisions—and this for good cause. Vermigli states that the Holy Scriptures teach none of these things because they do not further salvation in the least.<sup>10</sup> The Schoolmen disputed these things, quips Vermigli, but such disputes serve no purpose and bring only great offence.<sup>11</sup>

Significantly, Dionysian spirituality rested on the human inability to know God in his essence directly.<sup>12</sup> Dionysius proposed a negative theology which approached God by negation rather than by affirmation. Dionysius puts no stock in human philosophizing beyond what is in Scripture:

Here too let us hold on to the scriptural rule that when we say anything about God, we should set down the truth 'not in the plausible words of human wisdom but in demonstration of the power granted by the Spirit' to the scripture writers, as a power by which, in a manner surpassing speech and knowledge, we reach a union superior to anything available to us by way of our own abilities or activities in the realm of discourse or of intellect. This is why we must not dare to resort to words

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<sup>9</sup> *CP*, I.120.

<sup>10</sup> *CP*, I.120.

<sup>11</sup> *CP*, I.121.

<sup>12</sup> See H. D. Saffrey, "La Théologie platonicienne de Proclus, fruit de l'exégèse du Parménide," *Revue de Théologie et de Philosophie* 116 (1984): 1-12; E. R. Dodds, "The *Parmenides* of Plato and the origin of the Neoplatonic One," *Classical Quarterly* 22 (1928): 132-133.

or conceptions concerning the hidden divinity which transcends being, apart from what the sacred scriptures have divinely revealed.<sup>13</sup>

Dionysius is sure on this point: "Indeed the inscrutable One is out of reach of every rational process. Nor can any words come up to the inexpressible Good, this One, this Source of all unity, this supra-existent Being. Mind beyond mind, word beyond speech, it is gathered up by no discourse, by no intuition, by no name. It is and it is as no other being is. Cause of all existence, and therefore itself transcending existence, it alone could give an authoritative account of what really is."<sup>14</sup> If one wants to talk of this hidden transcendent God, one has to renounce human presumptive language.<sup>15</sup> Roques poignantly remarks, "Paradoxically, then, the divinization of the intelligence is dependent on this same intelligence renouncing its own output, its order of thought, and, more radically, its own self."<sup>16</sup> Dionysius was not, then, seeking a way to explain reality, but more properly a way to approach it.<sup>17</sup>

It is not, however, as if it is impossible to approach this God. In fact, Dionysius proposed a mediated ascent to God through a 'hierarchy' of beings.<sup>18</sup> Chenu says of this concept that it is the "keystone of the system of Pseudo-Dionysius; it dominated and

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<sup>13</sup> Pseudo-Dionysius, "The Divine Names," in *Pseudo-Dionysius: The Complete Works*, trans. and ed. Paul Rorem and Colm Luibheid (New York: Paulist Press, 1987), 49.

<sup>14</sup> Pseudo-Dionysius, 50.

<sup>15</sup> Pseudo-Dionysius, 50.

<sup>16</sup> René Roques, "Preface," in *Pseudo-Dionysius: The Complete Works*, trans. and ed. Paul Rorem and Colm Luibheid (New York: Paulist Press, 1987), 7.

<sup>17</sup> M.-D. Chenu, *Nature, Man, and Society in the Twelfth Century* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), 82.

<sup>18</sup> René Roques, *l'univers dionysien: structure hiérarchique du monde selon le Pseudo-Denys* (Paris: Cerf, 1983), 101; Andrew Louth, *Denys the Areopagite* (Wilton, Ct.: Morehouse-Barlow, 1989), 105ff.

supported everything else within that system and accounted for its spirit.”<sup>19</sup> Such hierarchy was not simply angelic and mystical, but also physical and external in the Church and kingdom. Leclercq mentions “One of Dionysius’s principles, often applied to political power both civil and religious, maintains that God’s gifts are bestowed from on high through intermediaries who can guide others to the extent that they themselves are enlightened. What is deemed to be the case with the celestial hierarchy is considered to have a counterpart in the structure of the Church.”<sup>20</sup> Such hierarchy for Dionysius was not so much ‘graded subordination’ as it was “a sacred order and knowledge and activity, being assimilated to God as much as possible.”<sup>21</sup> Chenu writes that Dionysius’ concept of hierarchy was particularly important for it “shattered the metaphysical scheme which locked up each nature within its own ontological perimeter” as evidenced in the Aristotelian concept of ‘substance.’<sup>22</sup> This created a much closer link between beings in the hierarchy—the action of a being above had repercussions on the being below.<sup>23</sup>

Progress towards union with God was made according to the law of hierarchical mediations, the so-called ‘*lex divinitatis*’.<sup>24</sup> René Rocques clarifies the Dionysian thought: “The totality of this twofold universe, the angelic and the human, constitutes a sacred order, an understanding, and an activity, all regulated by the law of hierarchical

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<sup>19</sup> Chenu, *Nature, Man, and Society*, 80.

<sup>20</sup> Jean Leclercq, “Influence and noninfluence of Dionysius in the Western Middle Ages,” in *Pseudo-Dionysius: The Complete Works*, trans. and ed. Paul Rorem and Colm Luibheid (New York: Paulist Press, 1987), 31.

<sup>21</sup> Andrew Louth, “Postpatristic Byzantine Theologians,” in *The Medieval Theologians*, ed. G.R. Evans (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001), 41.

<sup>22</sup> Chenu, *Nature, Man, and Society*, 83.

<sup>23</sup> Chenu, *Nature, Man, and Society*, 83.

<sup>24</sup> Kirby, “Peter Martyr Vermigli and Boniface,” 298.

mediations, both in the sense of the 'descent' of divine illumination and in that of the 'ascent' of divinization."<sup>25</sup> This double movement is most compellingly evidenced in Dionysius' description of the priestly action during communion. Dionysius argues that "the objective, the prime purpose of each sacrament is to impart the mysteries of the Deity to the one being initiated."<sup>26</sup> For such purpose, the priest, the hierarch lifting the people up, makes the highly symbolic round of the entire sacred place before commencing the rite of communion.<sup>27</sup> This circumambulation is interpreted in terms of the fundamental Dionysian idea of descent and ascent; procession and return. Louth writes of Dionysius' liturgical theology: "The earthly liturgy, reflecting the angelic liturgy, celebrates the outreach of God's love in creation and redemption, and in responding to that love, humankind, indeed the cosmos itself, is drawing into union with God who is beyond being, a union that is transforming and leads to deification."<sup>28</sup>

The symbolism of the liturgy lifted the faithful towards deification. Such symbolism was not to be explained, but rather to be experienced. Such symbolism lifts one up out of the plurality of life to the unity of the divine.<sup>29</sup> Rorem makes clear that Dionysius here is not advocating a return 'away from' the symbols, but rather 'through'

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<sup>25</sup> Roques, "Preface," 6.

<sup>26</sup> Pseudo-Dionysius, "The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy," in *Pseudo-Dionysius: The Complete Works*, trans. and ed. Paul Rorem and Colm Luibheid (New York: Paulist Press, 1987), 209.

<sup>27</sup> Chenu makes the important point for our discussion that "The 'sign' of Augustine and the 'symbol' of pseudo-Dionysius belonged to two quite different Platonisms." Chenu, *Nature, Man, and Society*, 82.

<sup>28</sup> Louth, "Post-Patristic," 41.

<sup>29</sup> Paul Rorem, *Biblical and Liturgical Symbols within the Pseudo-Dionysian Synthesis* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1984), 101.

or 'by means of' them.<sup>30</sup> As such the spatial and temporal symbols should not be dishonoured, but they are clear images of things beyond our ability to describe.<sup>31</sup> Rorem makes a key claim concerning Dionysius' system: "The realm of symbols is not merely an optional means through which one may be elevated; it is the *only* means."<sup>32</sup> Such is explicit in Dionysius' writings: "For it is quite impossible that we humans should, in any immaterial way, rise up to imitate and to contemplate the heavenly hierarchies without the aid of those material means capable of guiding us as our nature requires."<sup>33</sup> The symbolic has a central position in the thought of Dionysius for symbols are deemed by him to hold great salvific power. As such, Dionysius is tied closely to the theurgical tradition of the pagan neo-Platonic thinker Iamblichus.<sup>34</sup> While Iamblichus certainly went farther than Pseudo-Dionysius on the road of theurgy, Pseudo-Dionysius nonetheless ascribed great theurgical power to the Christian liturgical symbols.<sup>35</sup> Such symbols were performed by the hierarch in the prescribed manner, albeit beyond reason so that the hierarch himself could be lifted higher.<sup>36</sup>

## B. Pseudo-Dionysian Theurgy and Four-Fold Causality

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<sup>30</sup> Rorem, *Biblical and Liturgical Symbols*, 104.

<sup>31</sup> Rorem, *Biblical and Liturgical Symbols*, 105.

<sup>32</sup> Rorem, *Biblical and Liturgical Symbols*, 105.

<sup>33</sup> Pseudo-Dionysius, *Complete Works*, 146.

<sup>34</sup> See Fuller, "Sacrifice and Sacrament," 223.

<sup>35</sup> Compare here Rorem, *Biblical and Liturgical Symbols*, 106 and Fuller, "Sacrifice and Sacrament," 219. Rorem, in slight divergence with Fuller, still seems to think that Pseudo-Dionysius is not completely reliant on an 'elemental' celebration of the symbolic, but also an 'intelligible' celebration. Nonetheless, Pseudo-Dionysius is well on the road to Iamblichus' theurgical thinking.

<sup>36</sup> Fuller, "Sacrifice and Sacrament," 223.

Dionysius' thought had a great impact on the major theologians of the medieval period. It was through these theologians that his influence was felt and taught at the time of the Reformation. His thought in this period needs to be read within the context of the concept of 'instrumentality.' The discussion begins with Aristotle. In his *Metaphysics*, for example, Aristotle lays out what would come to be known as the four causes of an effect: efficient, material, formal and final.<sup>37</sup> The efficient cause is the agent productive of the motion or mutation in any sequence of causes and effects. The material cause is the substantial basis of the motion or mutation, the material on which the efficient cause operates. The formal cause is the essence of the thing and is determinative of *what* the thing caused is to be. Fourthly, the final cause is the ultimate purpose for the sake of which a thing is made or an act is performed. Interestingly, Vermigli regularly uses this four-fold schema to explain the causal relations within particular doctrines. For example, Vermigli uses these four causes to explain the cause of a proper Christian magistrate: "In this [the protection of law and peace] the efficient cause is God; the final cause or purpose is the protection of the laws and peace from the troubles associated with vice and corruption, as well as the increase of virtues. The formal cause is the order constituted in human affairs by divine providence. The material cause is man..."<sup>38</sup> This example of four-fold causality, one among many in Vermigli's theology, shows the various angles from which Vermigli, indebted to Aristotle, viewed each action. Further, it allowed him

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<sup>37</sup> Aristotle, *Metaphysics* V.2, 1013a24ff. On precise definition in the period of Protestant Scholasticism: Muller, *Dictionary of Latin and Greek Theological Terms*, 61ff.

<sup>38</sup> *PMR*, 223.

to understand complex relationships of causality in discussions of justification or predestination.<sup>39</sup>

What concerns us presently is an addition to this four-fold scheme of causality which occurred in Christian thought in the medieval era, *vis.* the instrumental cause. The instrumental cause is not a primary cause, as those four mentioned above, but is used by the efficient cause to bring about an effect. The instrument definitely effects the movement, but only in an instrumental way and not as the efficient cause *per se*. The importance of instrumental causes was highlighted in the thought of many medieval thinkers, including Thomas Aquinas.<sup>40</sup> Thomas has a very interesting discussion on instrumental causes. He states that efficient causes can best be described as two-fold: principal and instrumental. The principal cause is always God, yet God uses instruments to effect his plan. Consider a stick in the hand.<sup>41</sup> When one beats a tree with a stick it is in a certain sense the stick that effects the blow to the tree. On the other hand the stick is not the principal cause for it is only the hand that can cause such a movement. In the action both the stick and the hand have an efficient role, but the hand is the principal efficient cause and the stick the instrumental cause. A theological example of this in Thomas should suffice. In his discussion of sacramental theology Thomas states that the

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<sup>39</sup> See James, "Translator's Introduction," in *PJ* xxviii ff.

<sup>40</sup> *The Summa Theologica of St. Thomas Aquinas* Second and Rev. ed., trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province (1920), III.64.i.

<sup>41</sup> "*I answer that*, As stated above (3), Christ had a twofold power in the sacraments: one was the power of "authority," which belongs to Him as God: and this power He could not communicate to any creature; just as neither could He communicate the Divine Essence. The other was the power of "excellence," which belongs to Him as man. This power He could communicate to ministers; namely, by giving them such a fullness of grace--that their merits would conduce to the sacramental effect--that by the invocation of their names, the sacraments would be sanctified--and that they themselves might institute sacraments, and by their mere will confer the sacramental effect without observing the sacramental rite. For a united instrument, the more powerful it is, is all the more able to lend its power to the separated instrument; as the hand can to a stick." Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, III.64.iv

sacrament is an instrumental cause of the conferring of grace. God is the source of grace yet he uses the sacrament as a stick in the hand—as instrumental cause—to affect grace in the Church.<sup>42</sup>

Keeping the source of the instrument's power in focus is of particular importance for Thomas. Thomas retains an important place for the outward instrument, but does not seem to follow exactly the strong current of Neo-Platonic mysticism in this regard. Pseudo-Dionysius focuses strongly on the instrumental means of salvation in the hierarchy of the church, but the verbal meaningfulness of these instruments is not in primary focus.<sup>43</sup> In Dionysius we find a theology that surpasses language—a negative theology which seeks finally to transcend the secondary instruments by ascending the hierarchy of being to its origin and end beyond being. Although Thomas finds much in Neo-Platonism which is positive (indeed, Neo-Platonism is part of his grand synthesis) on this point he has a slight disagreement with Dionysius. His focus is the comprehension of the sacraments as instrumental means. The sacraments are certainly not purely cognitive, but the cognitive aspect must remain present with the use of the outward instrument.<sup>44</sup> In Thomas the primary efficient cause and the instrumental efficient cause should both remain in focus during the act. The sacrament is not only a mystical event, but one which is fundamentally intelligible. Yet it is important to note that from Vermigli's perspective he still does not go far enough. It is not enough that the sacraments are generally intelligible, but that they are also understood in the context of

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<sup>42</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* III.64.iv

<sup>43</sup> Fuller, "Sacrifice and Sacrament," 219. See Note 30 above.

<sup>44</sup> Fuller, "Sacrifice and Sacrament," 221.



biblical revelation by all those who are partaking. For obvious reasons, he did not follow the Reformers in making biblical revelation central for the Eucharist; hence there is still an over-carnalization of the Eucharist.<sup>45</sup> Vermigli might certainly be in the same trajectory, but there is yet a fundamental divide between the two. Thomas, hence, falls much closer to Pseudo-Dionysius, than to Vermigli.

### III. Over-Spiritualized Religion

An over-spiritualized religion tends to render the outward element useless. Certainly the outward elements might still have a peripheral place, but for the spiritually mature they become matters of relative unimportance or even of indifference. Two different types of over-spiritualization were known to Vermigli. Both were perhaps known to Vermigli before he left Italy, but certainly with one he had much contact in Italy and the other he encountered after his flight north to Protestant freedom. The first was the ‘illuminationism’ of Juan de Valdés and the Italian ‘spirituali’ and the second the ‘sacramentarianism’ of Huldreich Zwingli and the Anabaptists.

Martyr had contact with Valdés during his stay in Naples between 1537 and 1540. Valdés had emigrated from Spain where he had fallen under “the influence of ‘illuminationism’ and the sufficiency of the *luz interna* to explain Scripture and to inspire loving behaviour.”<sup>46</sup> In describing the religion of Valdés McLelland notes that “it was a religion of the heart, its inward piety and passive abandonment free from the outward

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<sup>45</sup> Fuller, “Sacrifice and Sacrament,” 221.

<sup>46</sup> Joseph McLelland, “Valdés and Vermigli: Spirituality and Degrees of Reform,” in *Peter Martyr Vermigli and the European Reformations: Semper Reformanda* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 241. See Angel M. Mergal, “Evangelical Catholicism as Represented by Juan de Valdés,” in *Spiritual and Anabaptist Writers*, eds. George Hunston Williams and Angel M. Mergal (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1957), 300ff.

means of grace.”<sup>47</sup> Valdés emphasized biblical authority, personal piety and the informality of church ordinances. Such church ordinances were not so important since the believer had direct access to the Holy Spirit.<sup>48</sup> All things of this world were diminished and all things spiritual emphasized. As such, Valdés should not so much be considered a *Nicodemite*—*i.e.* one who performs outward ceremonies even though he believes otherwise in his heart—but one who is indifferent to the outward forms of spirituality.<sup>49</sup> Certainly Vermigli and Valdés shared an adherence to the doctrine of justification by faith,<sup>50</sup> but they did not share the same view of the religious importance of the outward elements. Given his spiritualizing tendency, Valdés had no real qualms with staying in Italy despite his critique of the Roman Church of the time.<sup>51</sup>

McLelland’s acute analysis of Valdés is borne out by a close reading of Valdés’ writings. In talking of the Lord’s Prayer in his “Dialogue on Christian Doctrine”, Valdés through the character of the Archbishop says “by its own example the prayer teaches us that it should be brief in words, but abundant in content; and this kind is the Christian’s prayer. Besides, the prayer should be more spiritual than verbal.”<sup>52</sup> Mergal explains that such praying without audible words, and without ordinary means provided by the church,

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<sup>47</sup> McLelland, “Valdés and Vermigli,” 241.

<sup>48</sup> McLelland, “Valdés and Vermigli,” 244.

<sup>49</sup> McLelland, “Valdés and Vermigli,” 249.

<sup>50</sup> “I could well tell marvelous things if I wished to begin to praise faith to you, but this is enough to know, that you will be so far a Christian as you shall know that you confide in Christ; it being thus—that to be a Christian person is to be justified; and no one can be justified except by faith, because the just live by faith,” Juan de Valdés, “The Christian Alphabet,” in *Spiritual and Anabaptist Writers*, eds. George Hunston Williams and Angel M. Mergal (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1957), 387; see also James, *Peter Martyr Vermigli and Predestination*, 154ff.

<sup>51</sup> McLelland, “Valdés and Vermigli,” 250.

was one of the suspected practices of the *alumbrados*, of 'Illuminists', as the Spanish heretics were known.<sup>53</sup> Valdés explains that humans were created in the image and likeness of God, a spiritual being, and therefore need to strive for things spiritual. He explains to Giulia, his dialogue partner who is confused in her spiritual direction, that she must not put before herself things earthly and transitory (things not worthy of the excellence for which we were created in God's *image*), but things relating to the mind.<sup>54</sup> Valdés is clear about those seeing spiritual truth in outward or earthly reality: "Yet as the supernatural Light, by which alone truth is discovered, seen, and known, is wanting to them, they go wandering in a labyrinth of appearances and opinions."<sup>55</sup> To get out of such a labyrinth Giulia needs to lift her eyes to that which is eternal:

By withdrawing your mind from things fallen and transitory, and by applying it to those that are fixed and eternal; not wishing or endeavoring to feed it with things corporal, but spiritual, not nourishing it with things worldly, but with things celestial. And in this manner your spirit, finding its proper alignment, and seeing itself clothed with the new man in the *image and likeness* of which it was created, will always live content and cheerful; and here in this present life it will begin to taste of that happiness which it expects to enjoy forever in the life eternal, being thus that the happiness of man consists in his knowledge of God and of Christ shown by the light of faith, and in the union of the soul with God through faith, hope, and charity.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Juan de Valdés, "Dialogue on Christian Doctrine," in *Spiritual and Anabaptist Writers*, eds. George Hunston Williams and Angel M. Mergal (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1957), 322.

<sup>53</sup> See Note 4 page 321 in *Spiritual and Anabaptist Writers*, eds. George Hunston Williams and Angel M. Mergal (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1957). On the theology of Erasmus see Erika Rummel, "The Theology of Erasmus," in *The Cambridge Companion to Reformation Theology*, eds. David Bagchi and David C. Steinmetz (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 28-38; Rummel, *Erasmus* (London: Continuum, 2004).

<sup>54</sup> Juan de Valdés, "The Christian Alphabet," in *Spiritual and Anabaptist Writers*, eds. George Hunston Williams and Angel M. Mergal (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1957), 360.

<sup>55</sup> Valdés, "Alphabet," 360.

<sup>56</sup> Valdés, "Alphabet," 361.

Valdés uses an image of two men on a journey from Italy to Spain. One gets so caught up in the scenery along the road that he forgets his original principal purpose of reaching Spain and never actually arrives. The other, knowing the importance of his journey, will not stop at any of the feasts or entertainments that are offered him but presses ahead to the journey's completion in Spain.<sup>57</sup> Valdés is explicit on the meaning of his image:

Such are we in this life. We are all born and created to know God, to believe God, to love God, and after this state of existence to enjoy God. And, yet, there are some who feed on the pleasures of this world, not only delighting and giving themselves up to rest in them, but who are wholly forgetful of that other life for which they were created. There are also others who, being offered the same delights and pleasures, enjoy them not, nor take relish in them; nay, they are often insipid and distasteful, keeping always in view that other life for which God created them.<sup>58</sup>

Such is Valdés' push for the spiritual life. This life is characterized by a minimization of the outward element and a push for a direct link to the mental contemplation of spiritual reality. In fact, his characterization of the highest class of people, 'the holy', is that they are only seen by spiritual sight and they can direct their confession immediately to God.<sup>59</sup> The outward church is of minimal importance, as McLelland argues,<sup>60</sup> if not altogether irrelevant to the inward spiritual life of Valdés. Difference on this decisive point was the root of Valdés being able to remain nominally faithful to the Roman Church and Vermigli having to flee.

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<sup>57</sup> Valdés, "Alphabet," 361.

<sup>58</sup> Valdés, "Alphabet," 362.

<sup>59</sup> Valdés, "Alphabet," 370-71.

<sup>60</sup> McLelland, "Valdés and Vermigli," 241.

After his flight north, Vermigli still encountered this radically spiritualizing tendency. Many different Anabaptists groups and individuals would be considered by Vermigli as having harmfully jettisoned the outward instruments. Although Vermigli had much respect for Zwingli, he still felt that Zwingli's thought had a tendency to over-spiritualize the outward elements. In speaking of the Eucharist, Vermigli admits that Zwingli probably 'thought not so lightly' of the outward element, but nonetheless influenced those who tended in the direction of over-spiritualization.<sup>61</sup> More characteristic targets of Vermigli's critique of this over-spiritualization were the radicals Caspar Schwenkfeld or even Melchior Hoffman.<sup>62</sup>

#### IV. Vermigli's Early Life, Education and Career<sup>63</sup>

Vermigli certainly had opportunity to interact with these two poles of the theological spectrum *viz.* the over-carnalized and the over-spiritualized. Both in his life in Italy and in the North among the Protestants he considered (and rejected) these extreme poles of thought. Born in 1499, Vermigli had good schooling in his childhood<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> OTD, 106.

<sup>62</sup> See Vermigli, *Ad Corinthos* (1579), 228. Vermigli's critique of Schwenkfeld is studied in chapter three below.

<sup>63</sup> The most important biographical account of Vermigli's life is the funeral "Oration" of his colleague Josiah Simler. However, important additions to this biographical account include McNair, *Peter Martyr in Italy* 1967; Anderson, *Peter Martyr, a reformer in Exile*; Campi *et al.* ed. *Peter Martyr Vermigli: humanism, republicanism, reformation = Petrus Martyr Vermigli: Humanismus, Republikanismus, Reformation* (Geneva: Droz, 2002); James, ed. *Peter Martyr Vermigli and the European Reformations: Semper Reformanda* (Leiden: Brill, 2004); Olivieri, Achille, ed. *Pietro Martire Vermigli (1499-1562): Umanista, Riformatore, Pastore* (Rome: Herder Editrice E. Liberia, 2003). However, no complete study which covers all parts of Vermigli's life as well as McNair's covers the Italian period. Several shorter biographical introductions by McNair in *EW*, 3-14, and by James in *Vermigli and the European Reformations*, xiii-xxv are very helpful overviews of his life and work.

<sup>64</sup> Simler, in *LLS*, 12.

and, at the age of 15, chose to dedicate his life to God by joining the monastery of S. Bartolomeo in Fiesole.<sup>65</sup> There he joined the Canons Regular of Saint Augustine<sup>66</sup> (foreshadowing the importance Augustine would have on his later theologizing) and professed four years later taking the name of Peter Martyr from a thirteenth-century Dominican inquisitor of Verona canonized in 1253.<sup>67</sup> Simler records that “what most attracted Martyr to this sort of life was its leisure, which was not idle but dedicated to study and a large collection of very fine books.”<sup>68</sup> His wide exposure to the writings of antiquity included the reading (and memorization) of Scripture.<sup>69</sup>

Vermigli spent the next eight years at the University of Padua, which McNair rightly notes as “intellectually the most formative of his life.”<sup>70</sup> Simler notes that here Vermigli “dedicated himself wholly to philosophical studies and spent his days and nights in reflection on all the arts.”<sup>71</sup> It was here, also, that he met several of the other future members of the movement of ‘Evangelism’ such as Reginald Pole and Marc Antonio Flaminio.<sup>72</sup> But more importantly, it was in Padua that Vermigli received an

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<sup>65</sup> McNair, *Peter Martyr in Italy*, 78.

<sup>66</sup> Before his time, Vermigli’s group was reordered in the fifteenth century seeking moral reform. See Denys Hay “The Quality of Italian Religious life: Reform,” in his *The Church in Italy in the Fifteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 75. See also Simler in *LLS*, 13.

<sup>67</sup> Philip McNair, “Biographical Introduction,” in *EW*, 5.

<sup>68</sup> Simler in *LLS*, 14.

<sup>69</sup> Simler in *LLS*, 15.

<sup>70</sup> McNair in *EW*, 5.

<sup>71</sup> Simler in *LLS*, 15.

<sup>72</sup> McNair, *Peter Martyr in Italy*, 96ff.

education which would render him open to the Protestant cause. McNair describes his education in Padua:

It was in Padua that Martyr acquired his thorough training in Thomistic scholasticism, and first studied the writings of such rigorous exponents of Augustinianism as Gregory of Rimini (died 1358). Here he mastered the art of public disputation, and taught himself Greek in order to read Aristotle. He was ordained priest in 1525 and received his doctorate, and he stayed on in his Paduan monastery for an additional year to teach.<sup>73</sup>

This education proved to be very important in that it provided the framework from which he accepted or rejected any subsequent theological position with which he came into contact. Not only did he study the biblical text, but also classical philosophy, the Church Fathers and the medieval doctors.<sup>74</sup> Particularly noteworthy is that here Martyr identified with and read the Aristotelian philosophers.<sup>75</sup>

After Padua, Vermigli served in several important ecclesiastical functions and quickly received a reputation as a reformer of morals. Besides learning Hebrew in these years, he might also have spent a year in Rome working on the *Consilium de emendanda ecclesia* with Gasparo Contarini.<sup>76</sup> More importantly, in 1537 he was elected abbot of the monastery of S. Pietro ad Aram in Naples where he came into contact with several other Protestant-leaning Italians. Like others before him, he soon came under the influence of

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<sup>73</sup> McNair in *EW*, 5.

<sup>74</sup> McNair, *Peter Martyr in Italy*, 106. Bowd generally confirms McNair's analysis and history of Paduan humanism. Stephen D. Bowd, *Reform Before the Reformation: Vincenzo Querini and the Religious Renaissance in Italy* (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 167 and 173.

<sup>75</sup> Simler in *LLS*, 15. Donnelly helpfully characterizes the Aristotelianism at Padua: "The Aristotelianism that formed the core of the new Reformed scholasticism was not the traditional medieval understanding of Aristotle of the northern universities, but rather a transplant of the new approaches to Aristotle pioneered in Italy, especially at the Universities of Padua and Bologna and usually associated with Pietro Pomponazzi and Jacobo Zabarella. It was from this milieu that Vermigli sprang." *Calvinism and Scholasticism*, 12; See also Freedman, "Aristotle and the Content of Philosophy," V 234ff.; and McLelland in *ANE*, ix ff.

<sup>76</sup> McNair, *Peter Martyr in Italy*, 136ff.

and was an influence on Juan de Valdés.<sup>77</sup> This was a crucial time in his life for it is here that Martyr first encountered Protestantism: "It would seem that Martyr was already far advanced in Augustinianism and patristic studies, yet it was evidently here in the society of Valdés that he began to read the writings of transalpine reformers and embraced the pivotal doctrine of justification by faith."<sup>78</sup> Slowly he embraced these Protestant ideas (notably justification by faith alone, the importance of faithful preaching, the idolatry of the mass and the importance of Christian discipline<sup>79</sup>) and quietly came to teach and allow their being taught by those under his supervision.<sup>80</sup> This change is noteworthy for he worked in Italy for at least another ten years before he would flee for the North.

The influence of this doctrine on Vermigli's thought came out publicly for the first time in 1539-40 when in expounding chapter three of First Corinthians he denied the alleged proof-text for purgatory.<sup>81</sup> He was denounced for heresy, but won on appeal to Rome.<sup>82</sup> His fame as a reformer of morals grew and besides being employed by the Pope in an effort to bring reform to the Lateran Congregation, he was also elected prior of the influential monastery of S. Frediano in Lucca. This position was important for he not only had control of the moral reform of the monastery, but also the moral and theological reform of the city itself.<sup>83</sup> The most important of his reforms was the gathering together

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<sup>77</sup> See Joseph McLelland, "Valdés and Vermigli," 238-250.

<sup>78</sup> McNair in *EW* 6.

<sup>79</sup> See *EW*, 59 ff.

<sup>80</sup> McNair, *Peter Martyr in Italy*, 153ff.

<sup>81</sup> McNair, *Peter Martyr in Italy*, 161.

<sup>82</sup> McNair, *Peter Martyr in Italy*, 168.

<sup>83</sup> McNair, *Peter Martyr in Italy*, 206; See Gerrit Keizer, *François Turretini: Sa Vie et Ses Oeuvres et le Consensus* (Kampen: J.-A. Bos, 1900), 15ff.



of a small theological college dedicated to teaching the principles of the Reform.<sup>84</sup> McNair speaks of the importance of this college: "By this means he brought about a reform in doctrine that amounted to ideological revolution; Lucca came perilously near to civic reformation on the pattern of Calvin's Geneva."<sup>85</sup> Such a school could not evade the eye of the Roman See for long. Indeed, several of Vermigli's Protestant-minded associates in Lucca began very openly to promote Protestant action in the city thereby quickly bringing attention to work of doctrinal reform in the city. Indeed, as Anderson writes, "it was dangerous to comment on St. Paul in Petrine territory."<sup>86</sup> Vermigli soon realized that his position as a priest in the Catholic Church could no longer be tenable and, with the threat of the *Inquisition* becoming stronger, fled north to protest.<sup>87</sup> Choosing neither to suffer at the hands of the Inquisition nor to be a silent Nicodemite, he fled to join the Protestants north of the Alps.

On his flight north he stopped in Pisa and celebrated the Lord's Supper in what his first biographer Josiah Simler would call *Christiano ritu*.<sup>88</sup> John Patrick Donnelly notes that Simler here suggests that this is the first time Martyr celebrated the Eucharist in a Reformed manner.<sup>89</sup> This very telling event shows Vermigli had already recognized the over-carnalization of the Eucharist while still in Italy. Vermigli was no theological novice when leaving Lucca, but one who had greatly pondered his fate and wanted to be

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<sup>84</sup> LLS, 327.

<sup>85</sup> McNair, in *EW*, 7.

<sup>86</sup> Anderson, *Peter Martyr, a reformer in exile*, 25.

<sup>87</sup> McNair, in *EW*, 7.

<sup>88</sup> Simler, in *LLS*, 26.

<sup>89</sup> Donnelly, ed., *LLS*, 26 n. 48.

faithful to his convictions. He was certainly forced to flee the impending Inquisition, but he nonetheless chose his fate willingly.<sup>90</sup>

After traversing the Alps, Vermigli stopped in Zurich but soon found work teaching at the Academy of Strasbourg along side Martin Bucer from December 1542 until October 1547. We get a sense of the longing he had in his heart for reform in Italy when he describes Bucer in a letter to his erstwhile congregation in Lucca:

As soon as we arrived here [Strasbourg] Bucer welcomed us most warmly into his own house. I stayed seventeen days with him, during which I observed wonderful examples of godliness in both his teaching and life. His house seemed like a hospice since he was so hospitable toward pilgrims who were forced onto a pilgrimage for the sake of Christ and the Gospel... Since his whole day was spent in this sort of business, [sermons, church business, checking schools, promoting the Gospel, etc.] he devoted his nights to private studies and prayers. Never did I get up from sleep at night (I am telling the simple fact) without noticing that he was up. At that hour he was getting himself ready by his studies for what he was going to say during the day; at that hour by his prayers he was asking for strength for his daytime activities. Behold, dear brothers, there are truly holy bishops in our time on earth or rather in the Church of Christ!<sup>91</sup>

This was no new desire that Vermigli had while staying with Bucer, but it is something that he already shared with the faithful while in Italy. Apparently, if the last line of the above quote is read plainly, he did not have much opportunity to meet a godly bishop while in Italy. Furthermore, the fact that he is writing in Pauline manner “to All the Faithful of the Church of Lucca Called to be Saints”<sup>92</sup> presupposes that a group of faithful are left in Lucca to receive his letters. There is little outside evidence to

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<sup>90</sup> McNair, *Peter Martyr in Italy*, 292.

<sup>91</sup> *LLS*, 97.

<sup>92</sup> *LLS*, 96.

corroborate this claim,<sup>93</sup> but the claim is bolstered by the existing letters written by Vermigli both during and after his flight. Each of these letters reveals something about Vermigli's personal struggle (and therefore his theology) before he left Italy.<sup>94</sup>

In Strasbourg Martyr took up full-time the work of interpreting Scripture. His rapid rise to professorship beside Bucer speaks of the high value with which Bucer acclaimed him and the distinction of his actual abilities. Simler underlined the fact that Martyr never felt inadequate beside Bucer but rather showed his ability:

First of all, he carefully explained the very words of the sacred letters and their real meaning; he was able to do this very nicely because he had an exact knowledge of the three languages. Second, he investigated and uncovered the reasons and arguments which lay beneath what were otherwise simple and abbreviated expressions. He confirmed rather simple statements by other passages, he compared obscure passages with clear ones, he showed what might seem to go against the words under consideration and showed a way to reconcile them. He likewise put forth in a neatly ordered way with his gifted memory what the Fathers had thought and with sharp judgment examined what weight and strength the interpretations of each of them possessed. Nobody was his equal at explaining so skilfully and clearly the controversies that came up. But to all his presentations he brought two more things which are most necessary in teaching: exact method followed by a pure and plain style.<sup>95</sup>

This pure and plain style is contrasted, for Simler, with that of Bucer. Bucer was sometimes "kidnapped by his knowledge of many things" and wandered in his lectures.

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<sup>93</sup> Cameron notes that a group of Lucchese faithful to the Reform emigrated years after Vermigli's flight. No evidence exists to suggest that this was directly as a consequence of Vermigli's urging, yet it would be surprising to know that they had not heard of such an important Reformer. Cameron, "Italy," 205.

<sup>94</sup> See Vermigli's "Inaugural Oration at Zurich" in *LLS*, 323: "For I myself was for a time deceived just as the mist, darkness, obscurity, and night of the papacy imposes on many, but I did not stop learning and teaching the sacred writings in that blind debtors' prison as far as was then allowed. But later when by the benefit of Christ the heavenly Father took pity on me, I began to see the truth of the Gospel through a cloud and people walking like trees, nor was I able to keep silent about what I understood crudely and against the grain. I kept sharing with others, the light kept increasing, and I was teaching more openly with increased care and consideration. The business reached the point that I could no longer live in Italy without utmost caution. Therefore, students of theology, I came to Germany so that I might drink fully the more abundant and complete doctrine from the same place whence I had tasted the first elements of the Reformed truth through writings."

<sup>95</sup> Simler, in *LLS*, 29.

Vermigli, on the other hand, was always neat and orderly and projected a great modesty and mental equilibrium.<sup>96</sup> Indeed, this equilibrium of speech was consciously cultivated by Vermigli: conversely he saw disequilibrium as the source of many controversies.<sup>97</sup>

Soon, however, he received the most important appointment in his life when, owing to the lack of premier quality native Protestant theologians in England, he was invited to take up the senior theological appointment of Regius Professor at Oxford University.<sup>98</sup> At Oxford he engaged in some of the most public controversies of his life. He was involved in both ecclesiastical and educational battles during his Oxford tenure. At the invitation of Archbishop Thomas Cranmer, he was much involved in the theological reorganization of the English Church. He had much influence on the revision of the 1549 *Book of Common Prayer* and inter-Church debates on such matters as clerical vestments and religious vows.<sup>99</sup> Most well-known, however, was his public disputation on the Eucharist in May 1549 prompted by questions stemming from his presentation of this topic during lectures on First Corinthians.<sup>100</sup> Subsequent to the debate Martyr recapitulated his ideas on this controversial subject in the form of a *Treatise* on the Eucharist.<sup>101</sup> Although the over-carnalized Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation receives the brunt of his critique, he is also careful to distinguish his position from the

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<sup>96</sup> Simler, in *LLS*, 30 The original Latin reads : “sed eandem modestiam et animi equabilitatem perpetuo tenuit.” Simler in *LC*, C.i.verso.

<sup>97</sup> Simler, in *LLS*, 30.

<sup>98</sup> Simler, in *LLS*, 33.

<sup>99</sup> Simler, in *LLS*, 36ff. See Torrance Kirby, “‘Relics of the Amorites’ or ‘Things Indifferent’?” 313-326.

<sup>100</sup> Simler, in *LLS*, 33-37; See McLelland’s “Translator’s Introduction,” in *OTD*, xvii-xliv.

<sup>101</sup> *Tractatio de sacramento eucharistiae, habita in universitate Oxoniensi. Ad hec. Disputatio habita M.D. XLIX.* London: [R. Wolfe], 1549. English translation with notes: *OTD*.

over-carnalizing of Lutheran consubstantiation and the over-spiritualizing of Zwinglian sacramental memorialism.<sup>102</sup>

Unfortunately, Vermigli's tenure at Oxford was brief, for the Protestant king Edward VI died in 1553 at age 19 and through his half-sister and successor Mary (whom history has dubbed 'bloody') the kingdom reverted to Catholicism. Vermigli was given safe passage back to the continent while numerous native Reformed theologians died the martyr's death, including Cranmer, Ridley, and Latimer. Back on the continent Vermigli regained his position in Strasbourg for a time, but did not find it nearly as welcoming a place as before.<sup>103</sup> Since his colleague and friend Bucer was no longer the most influential reformer in the city, having died two years previously, Vermigli had a tough time fending off the critique and challenges of the more hard-line Lutherans. He continued in his position, however, and lectured on Old Testament themes as well as on, interestingly, Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*.<sup>104</sup> More and more, however, he felt the pressure of not having liberty to expound theology faithfully without fear of conflict.<sup>105</sup>

Because of the pressure of these Lutherans on Vermigli, he was delighted to accept (not without some solicitation) an offer in 1556 from Heinrich Bullinger to teach

<sup>102</sup> OTD, 106.

<sup>103</sup> Simler, in *LLS*, 40; See Donnelly, "Introduction," in *DIAL*, xii-xiii; Corda, 86-90; Anderson, *Peter Martyr, a reformer in Exile*, 378ff.

<sup>104</sup> Simler, in *LLS*, 42; *In Primum, Secundum, et Initium Tertii Libri ethicorum Aristotelis ad Nicomachum* (Zurich: C. Froschauer, 1563); Even in this commentary Vermigli steers the middle course. McLelland notes "Vermigli's commentary stands out from others in that it steers the fine line between the Scylla of the Scholastics, who made theology conform to Aristotelianism, and the Charybdis of contemporaries like Melancthon and Hyperius, who concentrated so much on theology that they help us understand Aristotle but little." McLelland, "Introduction," in *ANE*, xiv.

<sup>105</sup> Simler, in *LLS*, 43.

Scripture at the Zurich Academy.<sup>106</sup> These last six years of his life were among the most productive and happy.<sup>107</sup> Here he had leisure to publish some of his lecture notes and pen other polemical works he did not have the time to publish beforehand.<sup>108</sup> It was from Zurich that Vermigli was also called to represent the Zurich theologians at the Colloquy of Poissy in 1561.<sup>109</sup> This gathering was convoked by the French crown to attempt a resolution of the differences between Catholic and Protestant. Unfortunately, the conclusions reached were acceptable to no one and the meeting ended in a cementing of already well-drawn theological lines.<sup>110</sup>

<sup>106</sup> Simler, in *LLS*, 43; See Fritz Büsser, "Vermigli in Zürich," in *Peter Martyr Vermigli: Humanism, Republicanism, Reformation*, eds. Emidio Campi, Frank A. James III, and Peter Opitz (Geneva: Droz, 2002), 203-212.

<sup>107</sup> Michael Baumann, "Petrus Martyr Vermigli. Der Kosmopolit aus Italien in Zürich," in *Schola Tigurina. Die Zürcher Hohe Schule und ihre Gelehrten um 1550*, ed. Emidio Campi (Zürich 1999), 34-37; Baumann, "Petrus Martyr Vermigli: Doctor, Lehrer der Heiligen Schrift und Zürcher. Hinweise zu Vermigli's Tätigkeit in Zürich," in *Peter Martyr Vermigli: Humanism Republicanism, Reformation*, 213-224.

<sup>108</sup> Marvin W. Anderson, "Vista Tigurina: Peter Martyr and European reform (1556-1562)," *Harvard Theological Review* 83 (1990): 181-206; Campi, "Streifzug durch Vermigli's Biographie," 32-34.

<sup>109</sup> See Benjamin F. Paist, "Peter Martyr and the Colloquy of Poissy," *Princeton Theological Review* 20 (1922): 212-231, 418-447, 616-646; Alain Tallon, *La France et le Concile de Trente (1518-1563)*. (Paris Farnèse: École Française de Rome, 1997), 301ff.; Donald Nugent, *Ecumenism in the Age of the Reformation: The Colloquy of Poissy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1974).

<sup>110</sup> Despite the failure of the colloquy as a whole and a moderate conflict with Beza, Vermigli nonetheless received accolades from this Beza after his return to Switzerland:

*Huitain.*  
Messieurs de Valence, et de Sees,  
Ont mis les Papistes aux ceps.  
Salignac, Boutellier, Despence,  
Pour servir Dieu quittent la pance.  
Marlorat, de Besze, Martyr,  
Font mourir le Pape martyr.  
Saule, Merlin, Saint Paul, Spina,  
Sont marris qu'encores pis n'a.

Téodore de Bèze, *Sommaire Recueil des signes sacrez, sacrifices, et sacremens instituez de Dieu depuis la creation du monde. Et la vraye origine du sacrifice de la Messe* (1561), [no page number, yet last page of book].

## V. Conclusion

Judging by his flight from Roman Catholic Italy and the eager reception he received at many of the leading Protestant theological faculties (indeed, Vermigli was one of the most *physically* international of the Protestant Reformers), one might be tempted to surmise that he jettisoned much of his Italian theological heritage along the way. In a certain sense this is true; much of what, presumably, he professed as a Catholic priest while in Italy he no longer professed as a Protestant doctor of divinity. Yet, clearly continuity is evident in his theological method. In fact, although he changed certain of his theological positions throughout his career, he nonetheless retained a certain stance when doing his theology. Whether in Padua, Naples, Lucca, Strasbourg, Oxford, Zurich or Poissy he always remained critical of the Scylla of over-spiritualization or the Charybdis of over-carnalization of the outward elements of grace. Balanced by a calm 'mental equilibrium' he sailed a straight course through these perceived poles.

## CHAPTER III

### ‘Sailing in the Midst of Extremes’: The Incarnate Word of God

#### I. Introduction

Nowhere are Vermigli’s thoughts on the outward instruments of salvation more evident than in his comments on Christology. Christ’s human nature is the ultimate visible instrument in the plan of salvation. Yet, it is crucial that this human nature be understood properly. If too much or too little is given to Christ’s humanity then, Vermigli argues, the Christian is in grave danger—nothing less than salvation itself is at stake. Thus it is no wonder that Vermigli took so much time to refute improper Christological doctrine and to formulate his proper teaching clearly.

For students of Vermigli’s thought, the *Loci Communes* has often been a good place to obtain an initial overview. Indeed, Massonius’ 1576 collection and the subsequent 1583 English translation and revision of the diverse theological *topoi* in Vermigli’s thought has been standard reading until the advent of the new *Peter Martyr Library*.<sup>1</sup> Yet, in Massonius’ collection of the diverse *Loci*, we sense a certain unrest in his presentation of Vermigli’s Christology.<sup>2</sup> The plan was to model Vermigli’s *Loci* after Calvin’s systematic treatment in the *Institutes*, but it seems Massonius scarcely found any treatment which mirrored what he wanted to present. In fact, only the last two chapters of Part II of the *Loci Communes* compared with six very developed chapters in the *Institutes* deal with Christology. The last chapter, moreover, is an exposition of the

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<sup>1</sup> CP, II, chs. 17 and 18.



Creed which covers much more than simply Christology. No doubt sensing his presentation to be incomplete, Massonius concludes the only chapter dealing directly with Christology (including *Loci* culled from Romans, 1 Corinthians, and 1 Samuel) with an editorial suggestion to see other documents written by Vermigli which might help the reader get a better sense of his treatment of this crucial *locus* of doctrine.<sup>3</sup> Some of the documents to which he refers are reproduced in the appendix of the *Loci Communes*, but the most extensive, Vermigli's *Dialogue on the Two Natures in Christ*, had to be found elsewhere by the reader.<sup>4</sup>

Unfortunately, the *Loci Communes* is here somewhat deceptive for the interpreter of Vermigli's thought on Christology.<sup>5</sup> Perhaps, in that he was modeling his work after Calvin's *Institutes*, Massonius was looking for more Calvinist ideas of the offices of Christ or the theological import of his mediatorship. Clearly, however, he did not feel that these other documents mentioned fit adequately into the flow of argument about redemption that he was presenting. Perhaps Massonius' difficulty lay in the fact that most of Vermigli's presentations of Christology were occasional.<sup>6</sup> Besides the popular treatment of Christology in his early exposition on the Apostle's Creed, there is no one

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<sup>2</sup> See John Patrick Donnelly, "Christological Currents in Vermigli's Thought," in *Peter Martyr Vermigli and the European Reformations: Semper Reformanda*, ed. Frank A. James III (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 177-196.

<sup>3</sup> "Vide Dialogum de utraque in Christo natura. Caeterum de Christi persona, morte et resurrectione: Vide Conciones tres et Epist. 21. ad Polonos fratres." *LC*, 420.

<sup>4</sup> *Dialogus de utraque in Christo Natura* (Zurich: C. Froschauer, 1561); modern English translation: *DIAL*.

<sup>5</sup> John Patrick Donnelly in a recent article has important qualification of Richard Muller's treatment of Vermigli's Christology in *Christ and the Decree*. Donnelly, "Christological Currents," 196. Such qualification would be even more appropriate of Klaus Sturm's treatment of Christology largely drawn from the *Loci Communes* in *Die Theologie Peter Martyr Vermigli*, 112-187.

<sup>6</sup> Donnelly, "Christological Currents," 177.

systematic treatise covering the range of topics dealing with Christology. The later *Dialogue on the Two Natures in Christ* is certainly a substantive discussion of Christology, but deals with a very specific problem and solution. Despite this apparent lack of systematic treatment of the topic, the theme of Christology is nonetheless important in his thought.

Others have studied the historical details of and ‘currents’ in Vermigli’s writings on Christology<sup>7</sup>, but this theme can be more deeply studied to bring out Vermigli’s thoughts on the outward element. The links that Vermigli made between the diverse arguments of these documents and his whole corpus of writings are of considerable interest. There are several important common ideas which Vermigli wished to uphold. The most important is the relationship of the two natures united in Christ’s person and the analogical meaning of this for his other theological thought. What becomes clear in comparing these documents is the particular concern and continued effort by Vermigli to protect the rightful place of the human nature in Christ. In almost all the cases, Vermigli’s pointed remarks are against those who wish to give too much or too little to Christ’s humanity. In this, he is seen to uphold a strict understanding of Chalcedonian Christological dialectic over against what he considers as modern heresy. Further, the Chalcedonian logic protecting the two natures in Christ serves as an analogical touch-point for much of his other more comprehensive thought on topics such as the Eucharist and Scripture.

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<sup>7</sup> See Donnelly, “Christological Currents,” 177-196; Sturm, *Die Theologie Peter Martyr Vermigli*, 112-187; Donnelly, “Introduction,” in *DIAL*, ix-xxv; McLelland, *Visible Words of God*; Muller, *Christ and the Decree*, 56-67; Hans Christian Brandy, *Die späte Christologie des Johannes Brenz* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1991), 70-90; Anderson, *Peter Martyr, a reformer in exile*, 435-466.

This logic is evident in several examples of Vermigli's writing. From the earliest stages of his career as a Reformed teacher shortly after his flight north until the end of his career, there is a constant theme of protecting the integrity of the two natures in Christ. This is seen in the *Plain Exposition of the 12 Articles* written in Italian at the beginning of his career,<sup>8</sup> right until the most obvious example in his *Dialogue on the Two Natures in Christ* written against the orthodox Lutheran Johannes Brenz. Whether in these two documents, or the lesser known letters criticising the Christology of the Radical Reformers we see throughout the distinctive logic of Vermigli's adherence to Chalcedon.<sup>9</sup> Further, in a host of writings on Scripture, the Eucharist and Union with Christ which we will examine in later chapters we shall see how Vermigli's Chalcedonian logic was fundamental to his overall theological program.

The present chapter will examine the overtly Christological writings in the Vermigli corpus. As noted above, the *Loci Communes* only contain a very small amount of his total work on Christology. Yet even besides the much expanded list presented in this chapter, subsequent chapters will show that Vermigli's thought on Christology was even more widely dispersed across the length and breadth of his career. Christology is not a sort of 'central dogma' in Vermigli's thought, but it is a foundational theme nonetheless.<sup>10</sup> That orthodox Christology is both biblically grounded and completely applicable to contemporary theological debate is consistently foundational for his other arguments.

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<sup>8</sup> *Una Semplice Dichiaratione sopra gli XII Articoli della Fede Christiana* (Basel: Johan Hervagius, 1544).

<sup>9</sup> See *LLS* and *CP* Appendix for significant collections of Vermigli's letters.

<sup>10</sup> See Muller, *Christ and the Decree*, 1-13.

## II. The Sources of Vermigli's Christology

Vermigli was clearly and consciously an inheritor of the historic Christological thinking up to his time. The most prominent of his sources were the early church debates surrounding Christology culminating in the definitions of the council of Chalcedon in 451 CE.<sup>11</sup> Vermigli often makes explicit reference to Patristic figures of these first five centuries and applies their theological thought directly to his present situation. In line with his understanding of this early-Church Christology, Vermigli was concerned not to say too much and not to say too little about Christ. In terms of early Church theology, this could be stated as an over-emphasis on the union of the two natures, on the one hand, or too much distinction, on the other. Indeed, Vermigli can be seen as an inheritor of the Western or Roman orthodox reading of Christology. He consciously steers clear of the Alexandrine over-emphasis on the union of the person of Christ, but also of an extreme Antiochene distinction of the two natures.<sup>12</sup> Polemically, he is very concerned to confront the spiritualist or docetic Christologies which he sees so rampant in his own time. Apologetically, he is very cautious not to be pushed into the pit of Nestorianism—a charge often levelled at Reformed theologians.

It is clear that Vermigli upholds the western reading of Chalcedon, that is, in a manner consistent with Pope Leo's *Tome*, and not that which was read into it by the later councils and the Ultra-Cyrrillian party.<sup>13</sup> With Leo Vermigli has no fundamental

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<sup>11</sup> Henry Chadwick, *The Church in Ancient Society: From Galilee to Gregory the Great* (Oxford: University Press, 2001), 557ff.; Aloys Grillmeier, S.J., *Christ in Christian Tradition*, Vol. 1, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., trans. John Bowden (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1975), 541ff.

<sup>12</sup> Vermigli concentrates on situating himself in the orthodox middle in *DIAL*.

<sup>13</sup> See *Creeds and Confessions of Faith in the Christian Tradition*, Vol. 1, Early, Eastern, and Medieval, eds. Pelikan and Hotchkiss (New Haven: Yale, 2003).

objection to the *Theotokos* language as long as this is understood within the realm of language through the so-called ‘communicatio idiomatum’<sup>14</sup> and not based on a *real* borrowing of attributes. The logic of Chalcedon posits that the person of Christ is “recognized in two natures, without confusion, without change, without division, without separation; the distinction of natures being in no way annulled by the union, but rather the characteristics of each nature being preserved and coming together to form one person and subsistence, not as parted or separated into two persons, but one and the same Son and Only-begotten God the Word, Lord Jesus Christ.”<sup>15</sup> Importantly, the language of Chalcedon was not positive theological statements meant to *explain* the Incarnation, but rather “a statement of what is essential to it and what is denied by it.”<sup>16</sup>

Christological debates did not cease with the council of Chalcedon however. In the following councils, the focus turned to the implications of the “one-person, two-natures” logic. Most importantly, it was decreed that Christ also had two wills, the

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<sup>14</sup> “*communication of proper qualities*; a term used in Christology to describe the way in which the properties, or *idiomata*, of each nature are communicated to or interchanged in the unity of the person.” Muller, *Dictionary of Latin and Greek Theological Terms*, 72.

<sup>15</sup> *Creeds and Confessions of Faith in the Christian Tradition* Vol. 1; Henry Bettenson, ed., *Documents of the Christian Church* (London: Oxford University Press, 1963), 51; See Pierre-Th. Camelot and Pierre Maraval, *Les conciles oecuméniques: Le premier millénaire* (Paris: Desclée, 1988), 35ff.; Also see J.N.D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines* (New York: Harper & Row, 1960), 338-343.

<sup>16</sup> Paul Helm’s discussion of Chalcedon in relation to Calvin’s theology is useful here: “According to the Chalcedonian view of the Incarnation (as theoretically unsatisfactory as that view may be), whatever is essential to the divine nature cannot be yielded up in the Incarnation. That is, if there are properties that are essential to God being God—for example, omnipotence or omniscience—then in becoming incarnate God cannot cease to be omnipotent or omniscient. Perhaps he could veil or hide the manifesting of his omnipotence, but he certainly cannot give up or empty himself of it, not even in his incarnate state, for in giving it up he would have ceased to be God. This is presumably part at least of what the Chalcedonian formula means by claiming that the union of the Son of God and human nature is ‘without change’. (And similarly, of course, with human nature; if there are properties that are essential to a person’s being a human being, then these cannot be yielded up in the human nature to which the Son of God was united; this is also an implication of the ‘without change’ clause, but less relevant to us here.) As Calvin puts it, ‘Although Christ could justly have shown forth his divinity, he manifested himself as but a lowly and despised man’...It is important to understand that the Chalcedonian statement is not intended to be an

human will subservient to the divine.<sup>17</sup> Further, the logic of Chalcedon was intensified with the language of the *communicatio idiomatum* as employed by the medieval doctors. Although conceived by Bonaventure much after Chalcedon, this interaction with the Chalcedonian Christological logic is an important factor in Vermigli's discussions.<sup>18</sup>

### III. Historical Survey of Vermigli's Christological Writings

#### A. Positive Expositions of Christology

##### i. *Vermigli's Plain Exposition of the 12 Articles of the Christian Faith*

Vermigli's *Plain Exposition of the Apostle's Creed* written to Italian evangelicals fourteen months of his flight from Italy in September 1542<sup>19</sup> is an important source of knowledge of his early doctrine and involvement in Church Reform in Italy. It was written in Italian and shows, albeit in a popular and not technical manner, the mature nature of his Protestant thought. It reveals an irenical spirit that he chose the least controversial text, one which was fully agreed upon by the Catholic Church, as the basis of some fairly explicit Protestant teaching. Although his comments become more heated and polemical in the later articles (especially those dealing with Ecclesiology) the Protestant character of his exposition of the first articles should not be neglected. Indeed, the editor of the recent English translation writes that the opening theme of God as our

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explanation of the Incarnation, but a statement of what is essential to it and what is denied by it." *John Calvin's Ideas* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 61.

<sup>17</sup> Camelot et Maraval, *conciles*, 47-55.

<sup>18</sup> See Muller, *Dictionary of Latin and Greek Theological Terms*, 72-74.

<sup>19</sup> McLelland, 'Introduction,' in *EW*, 17.

Supreme God can be seen as dominating Vermigli's entire exposition of the *Credo*.<sup>20</sup> In one sense this is correct, but much more accurately could be said the Supreme *Triune* God. In fact, the doctrines of God, Christology, and Pneumatology are laid out as the basis of his later more polemical comments on ecclesiology.<sup>21</sup>

Vermigli's Christology is laid out plainly in his discussion of the article *I believe in Jesus Christ*: "we must acknowledge this Jesus Christ of ours as a unique [*singular*] person in whom the divine and human natures are indissolubly united."<sup>22</sup> Continuing, he interprets John 1:14 in a Chalcedonian vein: "John says 'Word became flesh.' "By 'Word' and 'flesh' he means nothing other than these two natures—deity and humanity in the one person of Christ—now eternally united."<sup>23</sup> Finally, in a preview of later conflict he will have with the radical reformers Vermigli writes that one must hope in Christ only because he is both true divinity and true humanity.<sup>24</sup>

Besides the practical benefit of this position, he makes several important doctrinal claims. First, this union between deity and humanity in Christ's conception relates to human nature in general. Vermigli writes that Christ did not loathe human nature, both body and soul, but "instead purified it and clothed himself with it, so that we might share

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<sup>20</sup> McLelland, in *EW*, 23.

<sup>21</sup> See his introductory comments on the article 'I believe in the Holy Catholic Church...': "So well does this article follow from what we have been discussing that sober judgment might consider the forgoing as the root or even the trunk from which the rest germinates and grows like a branch." *EW*, 59.

<sup>22</sup> *EW*, 32.

<sup>23</sup> *EW*, 32.

<sup>24</sup> *EW*, 33. Richard Muller gives an important clarification here: "Vermigli's Christology here also follows a Reformed rather than a Thomist pattern, refusing to separate the concepts of person and work and considering the person of Christ only in connection with his historical manifestation." Muller, *Christ and the Decree*, 59.

in his divine nature.”<sup>25</sup> By the incarnation, the union of deity and humanity in the person of Christ, human nature can now be sanctified and filled with grace. Not only was this Christ’s own human nature, but “also for all who by faith are joined to him as living members.”<sup>26</sup> The sanctification of the believer thus is based on this incarnational union of the two natures.

Yet, secondly, not just in the incarnation, but in the atonement we see the importance of guarding the two-natures logic—without the two natures unified in the one person there can be none. Vermigli bases atonement on the substitution of Christ for us. This substitution had to happen, at least from our point of view, for otherwise the justice of God would not have been fully satisfied.<sup>27</sup> Knowing this satisfaction made only by a God-Man, the believer can therefore have assurance of salvation and confidence to do the will of God.<sup>28</sup>

Vermigli here sees nothing less than eternal salvation at stake. Most important in this is guarding the wholeness of Christ. When too much or too little is given to the human nature of Christ, then he cannot act in his role of mediator. If he cannot be mediator, then atonement is impossible. Yet, in saying this, Vermigli raises several key questions in his doctrine of atonement. First, to what extent is it *necessary* that the person of Christ have these two natures for atonement? Second, from where could he have received such a theory of the atonement?

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<sup>25</sup> *EW*, 37.

<sup>26</sup> *EW*, 38.

<sup>27</sup> *EW*, 41.

<sup>28</sup> *EW*, 41ff.



The problem of necessity had been discussed by many of the inheritors of the Anselmian doctrine of substitutionary atonement. Anselm in *Cur Deus Homo* argued that Christ became man to be a substitute payment for sinful humans because of their debt of sin.<sup>29</sup> Much discussion had focused on the nature of the necessity of the person of Christ in two natures.<sup>30</sup> Certain writers had suggested that it was absolutely necessary for Christ to come as he did to pay the atonement. Others pointed much more to an arbitrary will of God which happened to choose this form, but which could have chosen another form.<sup>31</sup> Vermigli, however, does not exactly follow either of these paths. First, he makes a distinction among the various kinds of necessity. God was not bound in the incarnation to any kind of necessity of compulsion or nature. God did not have to set forth in the incarnation some prior or posterior reason seeing that whatever he does he does freely. In fact, argues Vermigli, salvation could have been brought about by another way if God had so willed. Hence, Salvation was of necessity, but that only of the divine providence and counsel.<sup>32</sup>

Yet, Vermigli does not here say that the claim concerning Christ as mediator is simply voluntaristic irrationalism. Even though of necessity only according to the divine providence, the atonement is still nonetheless clearly rational. According then to the decree of God, the atonement of Christ for humanity is necessary.<sup>33</sup> God certainly

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<sup>29</sup> Anselm of Canterbury, *Why God Became Man (Cur Deus Homo)* ed. and trans. Jasper Hopkins and Herbert Richardson ([no place]: The Edwin Mellen Press, [no date]), 88 and 102ff.

<sup>30</sup> See Anselm, *Why God*, 103 and 106.

<sup>31</sup> See Strehle, *Catholic Roots*, 88ff.

<sup>32</sup> *CP*, II.611. See *PMR*, 192.

<sup>33</sup> *CP*, II.610-611; *LLS*, 245.

addressed the problem of sin with a proper atonement.<sup>34</sup> This decretal necessity stipulates that the mediator must be both God and man; capable of being sacrificed and completing the process of sanctification.<sup>35</sup> Hence, we see the reason for which Vermigli fought so often for the retaining of the rightful place of the two natures in the whole Christ.<sup>36</sup>

From this small snap-shot of Vermigli's Christological doctrine we can see that the 'two-natures' logic of Chalcedon is very important. Nonetheless it is also clear that this commentary on the creed is a more pastoral and popular presentation of his ideas. The ideas in their basic form are certainly present, but the theological details of his understanding would be presented in later debates. It is in these that we see the rigorous and deep appreciation of Chalcedonian teaching emerge. Important to note is that this is not the *only* reading of the famous council possible, as we shall see, yet certainly there is an express *desire* on Vermigli's part to be faithful to its teachings.

## ii. *Sermons*

A second important source of Vermigli's Christology is his sermons. It is truly a pity that we do not have more of Vermigli's sermons and public orations for in the few we do have we get a good sense of Vermigli's passion for the Reformation cause. This passion often is revealed in particularly stimulating images or a real clarity of thought which helps the interpreter to understand his larger ideas better. Many of the sermons

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<sup>34</sup> CP, II.607; For an analysis of Vermigli's interpretation of the atonement, see Muller, *Christ and the Decree*, 60.

<sup>35</sup> LLS, 204-205.

<sup>36</sup> Muller, *Christ and the Decree*, 61-62.

and speeches will be examined in the discussion below of the 'audible words' in Vermigli's thought,<sup>37</sup> yet two are important for our present purposes as well. The first is an 'Oration on Christ's Resurrection' and the second is a Good Friday sermon on the death of Christ based on a text in Philippians.<sup>38</sup> Donnelly suggests on the basis of some veiled references to the First Schmalkaldic War and the early sessions of the Council of Trent that the first is a sermon preached in his first stay in Strasbourg in late 1546 or early 1547.<sup>39</sup> The second also is dated by Donnelly as a Good Friday sermon preached during Vermigli's stay in Oxford.<sup>40</sup>

The first sermon, an 'Oration on Christ's Resurrection,' has as theme the linking of Christ's resurrection with our resurrection. He sets out his theme: "We have noted his death, let us now note his resurrection. First, we will see that Christ did rise. Second, that we have risen along with him. Third, what those who have risen are to do."<sup>41</sup> His focus then is on the importance of the link between Christology and other doctrines. The resurrection is proved by the voice of the Angel from Matthew 28 telling the disciples "He has risen, he is not here." The first thing Vermigli states about this proclamation is telling: "The body of Christ is not everywhere."<sup>42</sup> Such is most certainly a "passing shot against Lutheran Christological teaching on Christ's ubiquity."<sup>43</sup> This is interesting for it

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<sup>37</sup> *LLS*, 277ff.

<sup>38</sup> *LC* (1583), 1045-46 and *LLS* 223-227.

<sup>39</sup> *LLS*, 224 n. 8.

<sup>40</sup> *LLS*, 246 n.131. See Anderson, *Peter Martyr, a reformer in exile*, 437-438.

<sup>41</sup> *LLS*, 223.

<sup>42</sup> *LLS*, 224.

<sup>43</sup> *LLS*, 224 n.12.

shows the brewing displeasure Vermigli was to have with Lutheran teaching. Already in this first Strasbourg period Vermigli was feeling pressure from the strict Lutherans there about the ubiquitarian doctrine. Confirming the precise character of the human properties of the resurrected Christ is thus a priority for Vermigli. The real humanness of Christ is integrally important for the real resurrection of the Christian's body.

Such sentiments are more fully seen in a second longer sermon on the death of Christ based on the famous Christological passage in Philippians 2:5-11. This Pauline passage has been the subject of much comment in Christian history, but Vermigli again shows forth his particular interpretation. He clearly shows that the most compelling interpretation of this text is the interpretation that was accepted by the orthodox early church councils. This text allows him to explain in more detail the two-natures logic that he so consistently supports. It should again be stated that this Christological teaching is not the main point of Vermigli's comments (or those of Paul). What is in view is the practical importance of Christology to the Christian life. Vermigli, following Paul, is talking about the humility to be gained from knowledge of the descent and ascent of Christ.<sup>44</sup> Vermigli comments that Paul here doesn't command humbleness on the basis of God's commandments, but on the basis of Christ's person: "So Paul first shows them who he is that they should imitate, God and man. Second, he shows in what things he was obedient, even to death and the death of the cross. Third, what follows as their result:

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<sup>44</sup> *LLS*, 235.

his exaltation above every name.”<sup>45</sup> Knowing the person of Christ should lead the believer to be of the same mind with him.<sup>46</sup>

Vermigli argues that Paul’s aim in this passage is to hold up ‘the dignity of Christ.’<sup>47</sup> Vermigli comments first on the idea ‘though he was in the form of God.’ The ‘form of God’ for Vermigli is the “majesty, comeliness, beauty, dignity, glory, and so forth.”<sup>48</sup> Christ most certainly had this divine form: “The person who does not see Christ’s divinity sees nothing.”<sup>49</sup> Vermigli adds the distinction that a form has not the property to corrupt but to preserve. Such distinction is made over against Arius who wanted to make Christ into a creature. The text clearly states that Christ took upon himself the nature of a creature. Taking upon himself means that he received something that he did not previously possess. If he was already a creature and not in the form of God then such a statement wouldn’t make sense: one can not ‘take on’ what one already is. Therefore being in the ‘form’ of God certainly means that he also was divine as his Father.<sup>50</sup> “The form of anything does not allow for a difference in essence from the thing whose form it is.” Hence Arius is here mistaken in his negation of Christ’s true and full participation of the divine nature.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> *LSS*, 236.

<sup>46</sup> *LLS*, 236.

<sup>47</sup> *LLS* 236.

<sup>48</sup> *LLS*, 236.

<sup>49</sup> *LLS*, 236.

<sup>50</sup> See *ROM*, 246.

<sup>51</sup> *LLS*, 237.

In Vermigli's argument Christ's divinity is as important as his humanity in the person of Christ. In a particularly important passage for Vermigli's understanding of the incarnation he argues:

Therefore the argument is to be understood as between equals. If the Son were unequal to the Father, Paul would not get the point he was making across to them: Christ was equal to the Father and obeyed him; by nature he was the equal of other humans but yielded to them. This is the meaning: he was in the form of God, but another clause is added to explain better: he felt, recognized, and judged himself to be equal to God and not by theft, and still he yielded to the Father's command. He did not boast about his dignity, which he could have done, but emptied himself and received the form of a servant...He did not abdicate his divinity; he could not deny himself. He who is the cause of all things did not cease to be divinity but only hid it under a man, the most rejected of men. He emptied himself in regard to both natures because he hid the divine and submitted the human.<sup>52</sup>

As Christ is in the true 'form' of God, so is he 'hidden' under a man. This hiddenness was not complete, but was as a 'veil' which revealed enough to know his perfection and to show the predestined his divine nature.<sup>53</sup>

Further in this passage, on the words 'was found in the likeness of men,' argues Vermigli, the heretics opposite the Arians raise a cry of triumph. The Marcionites argue that here is biblical proof for their docetic position that Christ looked like a man, but really was not. Vermigli is quick to counter their argument by showing that the passage is here not saying that Christ was not really human, but that his actions looked like all other human actions. Christ, even though having a divine nature, did everything which an ordinary human did (sin excepted). The divine nature did not degrade his human nature for he also had to eat, drink, sleep, walk, etc.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> *LLS*, 237.

<sup>53</sup> *LLS*, 238.

<sup>54</sup> *LLS*, 238.

Holding to the true human nature of Christ is one of the most important points necessary for salvation. Rejection of the clear teaching of this text is a fundamental problem in the Catholic Church argues Vermigli:

See how the church now goes astray, even in what is necessary for salvation, and so he is not welcomed as the Messiah. Some few holy people embrace Christ. The church of the scribes, high priests, and priests does not accept him. Thus the Gospel, because it condemns the flesh, represses free will, reason, human powers, doing what lies in one, because it calls the works of unbelievers sinful and denies justification by works, is rejected after being covered over with these follies.<sup>55</sup>

Such should not be the response of the faithful. Those who truly have the ‘spirit of faith’ need to guard what Scripture has appointed even in the midst of the pressure of the Catholics to the contrary.

### **B. Against the Radical Reformers**

A more overt example of Vermigli’s Chalcedonian logic is his epistolary participation in the polemics against the radical reformers who sought to minimize the place of one of the natures in the process of mediation. Several recent articles of John Patrick Donnelly cover the details of major players and writings in this debate. Donnelly has done helpful work in describing Vermigli’s debate with the ideas of the English-based Dutch minister Haemstede and of the Polish-based Italian Stancaro.<sup>56</sup> In both instances we see Vermigli emphasize the key idea of the mediatorial function of both natures united in the person of Christ. For effectual mediation both natures must be, to use the Chalcedonian logic behind his arguments, “without confusion, without change,

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<sup>55</sup> *LLS*, 239.

<sup>56</sup> Donnelly, “Christological Currents,” 180-196 and Donnelly’s translation of the four pertinent letters in *LLS*: Letters 126, 247, 266, 267.

without division, without separation; the distinction of natures being in no way annulled by the union...<sup>57</sup> In both cases Vermigli insists especially that there be a *real* human nature for mediation to occur. Without a human nature in Christ the mediator, there can be in fact no mediation and therefore no salvation.

i. *Against Schwenkfeld*

Vermigli also commented on Christology in his biblical commentaries. Largely because his commentaries were more concentrated on Old Testament texts than on the New Testament, and not on the Gospels at all, Vermigli does not often comment extensively on Christology. Massonius, for example, consolidates several important *loci* in the corpus of Vermigli's biblical commentaries, but certainly not very many.<sup>58</sup> Nonetheless these *loci* confirm the overall presentation of his Christology: throughout we see marked emphasis on the theme of the protection of the integrity of two-natures Chalcedonian Christology. Certainly there are other important comments on Christology present, but this theme is predominant owing chiefly to polemics against certain radical reformers. The most extensive of these *loci* is that from Vermigli's Oxford commentary on 1 Corinthians published in 1551. Although this specific instance in Vermigli's Christology has not yet been noticed by modern scholarship, it confirms our reading of this central theme in Vermigli's Christology.

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<sup>57</sup> *Creeeds and Confessions of Faith in the Christian Tradition*, Vol. 1, Early, Eastern, and Medieval, ed. Pelikan and Hotchkiss. (New Haven: Yale, 2003).

<sup>58</sup> Vermigli, *Ad Corinthos*, 228ff.



One interesting instance of Vermigli's exchange with the Radical Reformers is the verbal sparring of Vermigli and Schwenkfeld.<sup>59</sup> Schwenkfeld's Christology described by Vermigli was somewhat like that which Haemstede is said to have tolerated.<sup>60</sup> Vermigli apparently lumped Schwenkfeld's teaching in with the other Radical Reformers and when Schwenkfeld caught wind of this he was very displeased. In a letter to Katherina Zell in November 1551, Schwenkfeld writes that Peter Martyr in England has recently claimed that he, like several early church heretics, believes that Christ did not receive his flesh from the holy virgin Mary, but rather directly from heaven.<sup>61</sup> Schwenkfeld is pretty sure that Vermigli could not have got this from his writings, but rather inferred it from the contact Schwenkfeld had with Melchior Hoffman. In any case, Schwenkfeld considers Peter Martyr to be bearing false witness against him.<sup>62</sup> Not only does he on several other occasions speak of his disgust at being branded a heretic, he explicitly states that he does not hold such a Christological position.<sup>63</sup>

Interesting for our purposes is not so much whether Vermigli has misconstrued Schwenkfeld,<sup>64</sup> but that he has again judged one of his contemporaries on the strength of

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<sup>59</sup> On Schwenkfeld see R. Emmet McLaughlin, "Caspar Schwenkfeld," in *Oxford Encyclopedia of the Reformation*, Vol. 4, ed. Hans J. Hillerbrand, (New York: Oxford, 1996), 21-24; George Huntston Williams, *The Radical Reformation*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Kirksville, Mo.: Truman State University Press, 2000), 496-99 and 687ff.

<sup>60</sup> Donnelly, "Christological Currents," 183 n. 23.

<sup>61</sup> *Letters and Treatises of Caspar Schwenckfeld Von Ossig, 1550-1552, Corpus Schwenckfeldianorum* Vol. XII, ed. Elmer Ellsworth Schultz Johnson (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1932) 693.

<sup>62</sup> *Corpus Schwenckfeldianorum* Vol. XII, 693.

<sup>63</sup> *Corpus Schwenckfeldianorum* Vol. XII, 945ff. See Schwenkfeld's answer to Luther concerning these charges: Casper Schwenckfeld, "Answer to Luther's Malediction," in *Spiritual and Anabaptist Writers*, eds. George Hunston Williams and Angel M. Mergal (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1957), 161-181 (especially 179-181).

<sup>64</sup> Interestingly, Emmet McLaughlin describes Schwenkfeld's Christology as somewhat like what Vermigli says it to be: "Jesus Christ, the incarnated logos and living word, had assumed human flesh in order to renew it. Through his passion, death, resurrection, and glorification, Christ's human flesh was spiritualized

their faithfulness to early Church Christology. While lecturing on 1 Corinthians 15—  
 ‘The first man was of the dust of the earth, the second man is the Lord himself from  
 heaven,’<sup>65</sup>—Vermigli makes the comment that this text has been wrongly interpreted by  
 Marcion and Valentinus and their modern version in Schwenkfeld and his sect. Vermigli  
 says that on this basis they argue that Christ did not assume flesh from the virgin, but  
 from heaven thus derogating from the integrity of Christ’s human nature.<sup>66</sup> Such an  
 argument, for Vermigli cannot be made from this text. The text does not contrast Adam  
 and Jesus as if one was simply human and the other simply heavenly. Clearly certain  
 parts of Adam were in the image of the divinity and Jesus was certainly also human.  
 Vermigli cites both Augustine and the Apostle Paul as witnesses to prove the humanity of  
 Christ.<sup>67</sup> Vermigli argues that the Apostle is here speaking not of a heavenly human  
 nature in Christ, but of Christ’s perfection in this life.<sup>68</sup> According to Vermigli then,  
 Schwenkfeld had fallen into the same trap as the early heretics Marcion and Valentinus as  
 had the later heretics Haemstede and Stancaro. All of these men could not claim a real

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and deified. Schwenkfeld’s speculations about Christ resulted in a distinctive Christology, that of the  
*heavenly flesh...*” McLaughlin, “Caspar Schwenkfeld,” 23. McLaughlin writes that in his mature doctrine  
 Schwenkfeld had taught that Christ had never been a creature but always the Son of God in both his human  
 and divine natures. McLaughlin, “Caspar Schwenkfeld,” 23; See McLaughlin’s, “Schwenckfeld and the  
 South German Eucharistic Controversy,” in his *The Freedom of Spirit, Social Privilege, and Religious  
 Dissent: Caspar Schwenkfeld and the Schwenkfelders* (Baden-Baden: Editions Valentin Koerner, 1996),  
 125-152.

<sup>65</sup> “Primus homo de terra terrenus, secundus homo ipse Dominus è coelo.” Vermigli, *Ad Corinthos* (1579),  
 228. Obviously Schwenkfeld read the 1551 edition of this commentary instead of the 1579 edition used for  
 the present research. Further, this *Locus* is presented in the various editions of the *LC*, II, ch. 17.

<sup>66</sup> “Hinc Valentinus, Martion, et inter modernos Schvenckfeldius eiusque sectatores, non consentiunt  
 Christum assumpsisse carnem ex virgine, sed è coeso secum attulisse corpus arbitrantur.” Vermigli, *Ad  
 Corinthos*, 228.

<sup>67</sup> Vermigli, *Ad Corinthos*, 228.

<sup>68</sup> Vermigli, *Ad Corinthos*, 228.

atonement in their ideas for they lacked a real mediator— one fully divine and fully human who could actually pay for the sins of humanity.

Vermigli continues his comment with a separate *locus* on whether Jesus brought his body from heaven or assumed it of the Virgin's substance.<sup>69</sup> This *locus* essentially repeats ten arguments for the 'heavenly flesh' argument with specific refutations and then produces twelve biblical counter-arguments. For the sake of brevity, the ten arguments revolve around two main themes. The first theme addresses the inability of natural flesh to be capable of those properties of which Scripture seems to testify Christ's flesh is capable. Often it is argued that Scripture testifies to some great miracle of Christ which could only be affirmed if he had heavenly flesh capable of sustaining such miracles. Without such 'miracle-capable' flesh it would not be possible for Christ to have a human nature and therefore the believer would only have half of Christ. For example, the first argument suggests that if Christ is to dwell wholly in the hearts of believers, as Scripture testifies, then Christ must be wholly spiritual. For if the human nature is earthly, then believers could not have that nature dwelling in their hearts.<sup>70</sup> The second theme builds on this by saying that Christ himself testified that he had a sort of heavenly flesh. Most poignantly, for example, Christ on several occasions denied that he had an earthly mother.<sup>71</sup> This proved that his mother did not bear him of her own nature.

Vermigli responds individually to each of the ten arguments divided between these two themes and produces twelve of his own biblical counter arguments. First

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<sup>69</sup> "An Christus e Coelo Corpus Attulerit, aut an illud Sumpserit ex Virginis Substantia," Vermigli, *Ad Corinthos*, 228.

<sup>70</sup> *Ad Corinthos*, 228.

<sup>71</sup> *Ad Corinthos*, 228.

Vermigli argues that Christ's human nature must be fully human—he did truly take on his mother's substance and such was good. Further, the appropriation of the whole Christ is not simply of his two natures, but of his whole person and this by faith.<sup>72</sup> As such, there is no contradiction in positing a human nature from his mother in Christ. As for those places where Christ seemed to deny a human nature from his Mother, Vermigli argues that such is a bad reading of the texts in question. At all these places Christ is not principally arguing that Mary is not his mother, for example, but some other deeper spiritual truth. In any case, after refuting these ten arguments he produces a barrage of biblical citations which argue that Christ did indeed have a normal human nature. Some of these texts prove Christ had an earthly human nature for theological reasons, but many simply argue from the fact that Christ was promised by the prophets to be of a certain genealogy. If he in fact did not really derive his flesh from human beings, then he could not be from this genealogy.<sup>73</sup>

## ii. *Against Haemstede and his Actions*

In early 1561 Vermigli responded to requests of the consistory of the Dutch Strangers' Church in London concerning the problem of their erstwhile minister Adriaan van Haemstede (c. 1525-1562).<sup>74</sup> About a half year before Haemstede had been accused

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<sup>72</sup> *Ad Corinthos*, 228. "Ubicunque enim filius Dei sit, is nimirum est, qui naturam humanam coniunctam habet, licet non ubicunque ipse est, praesentem reipsa illam faciat: quandoquidem necesse est ad eius veritatem, ut suis finibus circumscripta sit, et loco certo contineatur."

<sup>73</sup> *Ad Corinthos*, 229.

<sup>74</sup> On the Haemstede affair see *LLS*, 184ff. and Donnelly, "Christological Currents," 180-186. On Haemstede more generally see Andrew Pettegree's entry in the *Oxford Encyclopedia of the Reformation*, Vol. 2, 207-208; Pettegree, *Foreign Protestant Communities in Sixteenth-Century London* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), 164-181; Pettegree, "Adriaan van Haemstede: The Heretic as Historian," in *Protestant History and Identity in Sixteenth-Century Europe*, Vol. 2, ed. Bruce Gordon (Aldershot: Scolar

of fraternizing too closely with Anabaptists. In July 1560 Haemstede had to come before the consistory and admit to having extended the hand of brotherhood to certain Anabaptists. He admitted this occurrence, but explained that it was not because he agreed with them, but simply for *rapprochement*.<sup>75</sup> The consistory did not agree with his naïve attempts at reconciliation and accused him of harbouring Anabaptist sympathies. Clearly all knew that Haemstede himself was not Anabaptist, but his belligerence in refusing to recant before the consistory brought their disapproval. Within a short period of time Haemstede was excommunicated and several of his supporters with him.<sup>76</sup>

One such supporter was the prominent Italian Jacobo Acontius who would later write *Stratagemata Satanae* (1565) which drew inspiration for its defence of toleration from the Haemstede affair.<sup>77</sup> Perhaps to counteract this influential Italian supporter of Haemstede the consistory asked Peter Martyr Vermigli as another influential Italian to support their side.<sup>78</sup> Further, John Patrick Donnelly argues Vermigli had already commented on the Christological doctrine of Schwenkfeld in his 1551 commentary on 1 Corinthians which the Strangers' Church probably knew about. They knew Vermigli's position on the issue and so wrote to enlist help in standing against Haemstede.<sup>79</sup> Whatever the reason, such a response was, indeed, what they received. Vermigli clearly supports their cause in this letter dated 15 February 1561 from Zurich. The point of his

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Press, 1996), 59-76; Patrick Collinson, "England and International Calvinism, 1558-1640," in *International Calvinism, 1541-1715*, ed. Menna Prestwich (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), 201.

<sup>75</sup> Pettegree, *Foreign Protestant Communities*, 169.

<sup>76</sup> Pettegree, *Foreign Protestant Communities*, 169ff.; Pettegree, "Adriaan van Haemstede," 76.

<sup>77</sup> *LLS*, 184, n. 247; Donnelly, "Christological Currents," 182.

<sup>78</sup> *LLS*, 184, n. 247.

<sup>79</sup> Donnelly, "Christological Currents," 183, n. 23.

letter is to prove the severity of the Anabaptist error with which Haemstede was interacting all the while counselling the Church to receive him back if he does repent of his error.<sup>80</sup>

Vermigli's knowledge of the situation is clear in the first lines of his letter. Much like his comments on Schwenkfeld, Vermigli criticized Haemstede's acceptance of Anabaptist Christology: "He has decided that the perverse opinion that Christ's flesh was brought down from heaven and not taken from the Blessed Virgin does not deprive the Anabaptists of salvation even if they obstinately cling to it; rather, in their profession they still belong both to Christ and to the Church."<sup>81</sup> Besides the criticism for Haemstede's endorsing, albeit implicitly, what he sees as an Anabaptist Christology, Vermigli is equally quick to reprove the negative fallout for the other members of the congregation. What Vermigli is concerned with here is nothing less than believers' loss of their inheritance of the kingdom of God.<sup>82</sup>

Passing from the specific case, Vermigli takes up the problem of Anabaptist Christology more generally. His summary of the problem is particularly helpful in clarifying his position:

[W]e cannot but wonder that the Anabaptists are said to have a true mediator even though they believe that his flesh was not taken from the Virgin but was brought down from heaven. Certainly he cannot be a mediator unless he exists and is grasped by faith in the same way that God constituted him and revealed his promises. He decreed that he would have flesh from human beings and testified to this in clear and open words in the divine letters. Hence those who paste a

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<sup>80</sup> *LLS*, 184 and 197.

<sup>81</sup> *LLS*, 184.

<sup>82</sup> *LLS*, 185.

heavenly flesh on him do not have the mediator proposed by God but one which they have dreamed up and invented for themselves in their own brain.<sup>83</sup>

What we see here is the important place of affirmation of the integrity of the human nature in Christ. Vermigli is clear here that this Anabaptist position is neither simply trivial nor due to theological ignorance, but rather a bald unbelief which causes colossal harm.<sup>84</sup> He uses an analogy here to show why this error has grave theological significance. As a mathematician who thinks a triangle has four corners will not have grasped a triangle, but a quadrangle in their minds, so the person who thinks Christ has a heavenly human nature will not have a salvific mediator but a creation of their own minds.<sup>85</sup> The situation is made worse in that those propounding these beliefs do not simply do it lightly, but are stubborn in their propositions thus making them tumble into unbelief.<sup>86</sup>

This unbelief is larger than simply the individual doctrine. By denying that Christ had an earthly human nature, the Anabaptists and Haemstede with them, argues Vermigli, are denying the reliability of Scripture, which everywhere talks of the reality of Christ's human nature, and the work of the Holy Spirit in inspiring the Scripture.<sup>87</sup> Not only does Haemstede accept that one can hold to the idea that Christ's real human nature is not necessary for salvation, he also implicitly accepts the idea that the literal teachings of Scripture are superfluous to salvation. Vermigli's Chalcedonian Christology bolsters his

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<sup>83</sup> *LLS*, 186.

<sup>84</sup> *LLS*, 186.

<sup>85</sup> *LLS*, 189.

<sup>86</sup> *LLS*, 189.

<sup>87</sup> *LLS*, 190.

literal interpretation of Scripture. As the human nature is not superfluous to the total person of Christ, so the letter of Scripture is not superfluous to a higher spiritual reading. The literal interpretation must be the ground of any reading of Scripture. Therefore, the facts of Jesus' life—including the taking of human nature from the Virgin Mary—must be held firm: "All who do not believe and confess these things with faith are cut off from the hope of salvation, unless they repent."<sup>88</sup> Such unbelief for Vermigli is indistinguishable from that of the Early Church heretics. Vermigli states the Church rightly opposed early Church heresy ("the Arians, Nestorians, Eutychians, Ebionites, and similar plagues"<sup>89</sup>) even as they should oppose contemporary Church heresy.

Not only do Vermigli's comments on the human nature of Christ have impact on the reliability of Scripture, but, as has been briefly mentioned, it is most directly related to the doctrine of the atonement. Again, Vermigli points out that for the substitution actually to be valid the substitute for humanity must be, in fact, a human. Hence, Vermigli strenuously objects to taking the real humanity away from Christ.<sup>90</sup>

### iii. *Against Stancaro and Mediation According to the Human Nature Alone*

Vermigli's repudiation of the central idea in Stancaro's thought provides another example of the foundational role of a well-ordered Christology.<sup>91</sup> Three letters from the pen of Vermigli have come down to us arguing against his fellow Italian-born opponent. Before the period in which Vermigli responded to his ideas, Stancaro had had a long and

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<sup>88</sup> *LLS*, 191.

<sup>89</sup> *LLS*, 191.

<sup>90</sup> *LLS*, 192.

<sup>91</sup> See Anderson "Vista Tigurina," 181-206.



often difficult career.<sup>92</sup> Stancaro, originally from Mantua in Italy, had travelled extensively throughout Poland, Hungary, and Transylvania, only to return to Poland in 1559 in order to settle down.<sup>93</sup> He immediately began to propound his teaching of Christ's mediatorship solely through his human nature and not through his divine nature. Vermigli's first letter, however, is not directed specifically against the ideas of Stancaro, but is a more general letter a few years earlier in response to Francesco Lismanino on specific debated points in the Polish church.<sup>94</sup> Lismanino, although later disfavoured by the Reformed for his anti-Trinitarian views, was at this point the co-superintendent of the Reformed Church of Pínczów, Poland. Wanting help from abroad, Lismanino wrote to the Swiss asking for aid to which Vermigli responded in a letter dated 14 February 1556.<sup>95</sup> Although only one paragraph of this letter deals directly with the Stancaro problem there is much in the surrounding comments which help us contextualize Vermigli's attacks on Stancaro's Christology.

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<sup>92</sup> In a fight with Osiander in his 1552 *Apologia contra Osiandrum* Stancaro had initially formulated his opinions on Christ as mediator only in his human nature.

<sup>93</sup> See especially Donnelly "Christological Currents," 186ff.; also Williams, *Radical Reformation*, 934ff. and Ch. 25; Anderson, *Peter Martyr, a reformer in exile*, 439-455; Joseph N. Tylenda, "Christ the Mediator: Calvin versus Stancaro," *Calvin Theological Journal* 8, no. 1 (1973): 5-10; Tylenda, "The Controversy on Christ the Mediator: Calvin's Second Reply to Stancaro," *Calvin Theological Journal* 8, no. 2 (1973): 131-157; Theodor Wotschke, *Geschichte der Reformation in Polen* (Leipzig: Rudolf Haupt, 1911), 179-193.

<sup>94</sup> Anderson, *Peter Martyr, a reformer in exile*, 442.

<sup>95</sup> This letter as well as the other two concerning Stancaro cited below have been translated in Donnelly, *LLS: Letters* 126, 247 and 267. Further, Donnelly has analyzed the contents of these letters in 'Christological Currents' article on pages 186-196. The first letter is found in the original Latin in all editions of the *Loci Communes*, but the other two have only been available in their 1561 Zurich edition. Vermigli, *Epistolae duae, ad Ecclesias Polonicas, Iesu Christ...de negotio Stancario* (Zurich: C. Froschauer, March, 1561).

The tone in this letter addressing the theological problems in Poland is generally harsh.<sup>96</sup> Vermigli laments the fact that these men know better, but continue to ignore the commands of God and fabricate their own teachings. He brings up the problem of the right *use* of God's things:

[Y]our first care should be to join innocence and purity of life to the truth of God, which he has kindly revealed to us. Otherwise it will profit us nothing and indeed prove extremely harmful to have known the mind of God, explored his will, and understood the mysteries of the divine letters when we will have denied all this by our actions and lives. I ask, what is this except locking up God's truth in injustice, as Paul says? The first step towards godliness is to know rightly the things that God wants us to use in worshipping him.<sup>97</sup>

Here then is a fundamental problem with promoters of heresy: rather than using what God has ordained, they abuse it. Such abuse is not a light thing, but "makes for our condemnation, and that a most harsh one."<sup>98</sup> Heretics place confidence in their own cleverness or figments of their own imagination, the very opposite of biblical faith. All heresy, Vermigli could argue, could be stated as a conscious willing to choose one's own doctrinal formulations over what has been revealed plainly in Scripture and formulated by the early Church in the four great ecumenical councils.

Vermigli gives examples of this heretical will. All heretics claim that they are worshipping the true God, but they go on to add their own teachings or those of other heretical writers. He singles out several heretics in particular as guilty of this charge. Arius and Servetus are the first mentioned, both of whom deny Christ's divinity. Then there are those who "revere and embrace Christ as the true Son of God and our redeemer, but they soon either confuse his two natures or else deny he exists as a human creature;

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<sup>96</sup> Donnelly, "Christological Currents," 188.

<sup>97</sup> *LLS*, 143.

they say with equal boldness and ignorance that his body is spread and exists everywhere.”<sup>99</sup> This last remark represents a stab at the Lutheran ubiquitarians whom Martyr was then battling in Strasbourg. Also are those who “dream up in a mad way that his flesh was not taken from the material of the blessed Virgin Mary but was either brought down from heaven or was conceived and formed from the substance of the Holy Spirit.”<sup>100</sup> Donnelly suggests that this shaft is aimed at Menno Simmons or Karlstadt,<sup>101</sup> but more directly, as has been shown, it could have been aimed at Schwenkfeld. All of these men have made the egregious error of choosing to understand by their own imagination rather than by Scripture. Scripture must thus be the norm to resolve the debate in the Polish Church: “Who except a fool or madman would grant that these fellows confess and accept the true God and the true Christ as he is described in the sacred letters?”<sup>102</sup> Nothing should be believed unless it agrees with Scripture.<sup>103</sup>

Vermigli continues his letter by explaining the Sacrament in the following scriptural and ordered manner. He comes to the five specific questions of Lismanino towards the end of the letter and gives a short paragraph response to each question. In the first he strongly denies that Christ suffered in his divine nature. He eludes this problem by explaining a proper understanding of the *communicatio idiomatum*. Scripture in 1 Cor. 2:8, for example, can talk of such suffering because it attributes to the whole Christ what

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<sup>98</sup> LLS, 143.

<sup>99</sup> LLS, 143.

<sup>100</sup> LLS, 143.

<sup>101</sup> Donnelly, “Christological Currents,” 188.

<sup>102</sup> LLS, 144.

<sup>103</sup> LLS, 145.

is proper only to the one nature.<sup>104</sup> In the same vein is the refutation of Stancaro. Martyr confesses that the Lord is mediator in both natures. He gives no credit to the Stancarist interpretation of 1 Tim. 2:5, 'one mediator between God and men, the man Christ,' which supposedly proved that Christ was only a mediator in his human nature. Stancaro felt that this better guarded the divine nature of Christ from a sort of unlawful and inferior subordination to the Father.<sup>105</sup> Such an interpretation is nonsense for Vermigli. First, in the passage from I Timothy, the writer mentions the name 'Christ' which signifies the whole person and thus the divine nature as well as the human nature. Second, because Scripture testifies that Christ's divine nature was joined to his human nature this should be taken as proper and fitting. Scripture does not say exactly why no other mediator could be found, so we should believe that "it is fitting for a true mediator to have joined in himself the two parts of those involved."<sup>106</sup>

A third point by Vermigli again underlines the importance of a clear understanding of the *communicatio idiomatum*. While properly guarding the natures, yet allowing for verbal borrowing in Scripture one can avoid absurd statements and the mixing and confounding of the two natures of Christ. With a proper understanding "it will not be hard for us to understand the origins of his properties."<sup>107</sup> The fourth and fifth replies are against the "essential justice" doctrines of Osiander and the antitrinitarian teachings of Michael Servetus. Vermigli is particularly pointed against Servetus: "As regards the Spaniard Servetus, I do not have anything else to say except that he was a

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<sup>104</sup> LLS, 151.

<sup>105</sup> Tylenda, "Christ as Mediator," 5.

<sup>106</sup> LLS, 152.

<sup>107</sup> LLS, 153.

genuine son of the devil, whose plague-bearing and hateful teaching has been spread about everywhere. The magistrates who exacted from him the supreme penalty should not be accused since they could get from him no indications of amendment and his blasphemies were utterly intolerable.”<sup>108</sup> Such words put the comments on the other subjects well into focus. Although this letter dealt with much more than Stancaro, it shows the seriousness with which Vermigli treated Stancaro’s Christological questions. All were heresy and resulted from the conscious will of the person to negate what he or she knew full-well from Scripture.

These general observations on Stancaro and his followers in this first letter, then, set the stage for the next two more specific and detailed letters. In 1559 Stancaro was again stirring up trouble.<sup>109</sup> Soon his ideas were debated at many regional synods. At the synodical assembly of Pínczów, 7 August 1559, the debate came to a head. Stancaro would not back down from his theological positions. Williams mentions that “under the direction of Łaski and Lismanino, the controversy was so heated that Łaski threw a heavy Bible at Stancaro’s head, failing in his rage even then to impress the Word of God on the pugnacious, loquacious, but patristically and scholastically more Catholic theologian.”<sup>110</sup> The synod in 1559 excommunicated Stancaro and decreed that any pastor following him should be deprived of office. Nonetheless Stancaro managed to win supporters in Poland and necessitated the even more strenuous opposition of the synod.<sup>111</sup> Unfortunately, the

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<sup>108</sup> *LLS* 154.

<sup>109</sup> Tylanda, “Christ as Mediator,” 165.

<sup>110</sup> Williams, *Radical Reformation*, 1029.

<sup>111</sup> See Williams, *Radical Reformation*, 1028ff. for more detail on the events and publications surrounding this synod and its aftermath. This includes the ‘Confessio de Mediatore generis humani Jesu Christo Deo et

synod had just lost their leading theological voice in the death of Johannes à Lasco. With no clear authority remaining the synod was even more in need of the support influential friends abroad and so again requested their views on the Stancaro subject.<sup>112</sup> Both Geneva, in a letter of John Calvin,<sup>113</sup> and Zurich, in a letter of Peter Martyr, wrote back.<sup>114</sup>

Comparing the two letters provides valuable insight into the essential issues of the debate.<sup>115</sup> Calvin's letter at the behest of the Geneva consistory in June 1560 first laments the death of the godly à Lasco and points out that the ungodly Stancaro is only driven by ambition, 'the mother of heresy,' to inflict injury and promote his cause.<sup>116</sup> Against the position that Christ was mediator solely according to the flesh, Calvin argues that Christ was not simply mediator since his incarnation, but since the creation of the world.<sup>117</sup> As such, he must be mediator also as he is the eternal Word of God. Further, since he is also above the angels and is also their mediator, he cannot be simply mediator

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homine' translated in Williams, *Radical Reformation*, 1030-1031. Williams argues this confession "is a compact, critically worded document, organized around the Erasmian—Laskian *triplex munus Christi*, with Jesus Christ assigned the office as Mediator in the following order: as Prophet, Priest, and King. It states the emerging Reformed position, which had moved from the *theory of the satisfaction of God's honor and ransom to the Devil* (Anselm and Lombard) to a more fully scriptural (Pauline) *penal theory of the innocent Second Adam's assumption* of the punishment due all the progeny of the First Adam." 1030.

<sup>112</sup> Donnelly, "Christological Currents," 189.

<sup>113</sup> On Calvin's Christology generally see: David Foxgrover, "The Humanity of Christ: Within Proper Limits," in *Calviniana: Ideas and Influence of Jean Calvin*, ed. Robert V. Schnucker (Kirkville, Mo.: Sixteenth Century Journal Publishers, 1988), 93-105.

<sup>114</sup> Tylanda, "Christ as Mediator," 12ff. and *LLS*, 178ff.

<sup>115</sup> See Donnelly, "Christological Currents," 190. "The two letters make an interesting contrast. They are nearly identical in length. Both start by lamenting Laski's death. Calvin takes up the question of the priesthood of Christ, something Martyr does not treat. Calvin has fourteen scripture citations, Martyr only four. Martyr's letter impressed me as more theological, clear and profound than Calvin's."

<sup>116</sup> Tylanda, "Christ as Mediator," 12.

<sup>117</sup> Tylanda, "Christ as Mediator," 12.

in his human nature which is below the angels.<sup>118</sup> From the Apostle's teaching in Heb. 2:17, he argues that Christ needed human flesh and blood to be a mediator to humanity and needed the same divinity as the Father to be our director and guide.<sup>119</sup> Turning to the argument from the offices of Christ, Calvin argues that he could not be priest without being divine. Yet, he is conscious also to say that although mediator in his whole person, some actions considered by themselves refer properly to one nature.<sup>120</sup> Without Christ's mediation in his whole person there is no atonement possible.

Vermigli's letter on behalf of the ministers of Zurich of 27 May 1560 is a response to Felix Cruciger, then Superintendent of the Churches of Lesser Poland. He too opens by lamenting the death of Johannes à Lasco and the rise of the sectarians in the Polish churches.<sup>121</sup> His first argument against Stancaro is that based on the Person of Christ: "Christ Jesus is one person in whom the two natures subsist in a way that they are joined with each other so that they cannot in any way be pulled apart from each other."<sup>122</sup> This unity is the foundation of his following arguments on all the action of Christ (including that of mediation). The actions of Christ should be primarily attributed to the person or hypostasis because the two natures do not subsist separately and by themselves. According to the *communicatio idiomatum* one nature is not doing one work while the other nature performs another. Yet, the properties of the two natures should be kept

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<sup>118</sup> Tylenda, "Christ as Mediator," 13.

<sup>119</sup> Tylenda, "Christ as Mediator," 13.

<sup>120</sup> Tylenda, "Christ as Mediator," 15.

<sup>121</sup> *LLS*, 178.

<sup>122</sup> *LLS*, 179. "Christus Iesus est una persona, in qua duae naturae subsistunt, adeò inter sese coniunctae, ut nullo modo à se inuicem sint diuellendae." *Epistolae Duae*, 2.

distinct, whole, and unmixed so that they are not in any way confused.<sup>123</sup> Thus when a divine or a human action is performed it is assigned to the person itself in which the two natures exist, but insofar as he was God or man. All actions are assigned to the person, although they may be specifically accomplished by one or the other of the natures. Thus Christ's birth was of the whole person, but insofar as he was human. Also Christ is eternal or being everywhere present in his person or hypostasis, but insofar as he was God.<sup>124</sup>

Key to the discussion is Vermigli's argument that the work of mediator is not single, but various. All the work of mediation is done by the person of Christ, since it is impossible for him to do any work outside of his person, but some is properly assigned to him insofar as he was God and some insofar as he was man. As man he was born, died, was buried, and ascended into heaven—acts which because of the excellence of the divinity which was in Christ were "supremely pleasing" to God and were "acceptable to the Father for our redemption."<sup>125</sup> Although done in Christ's human nature, such works would have no effect outside of his also being divine. Hence, works done by angels or any other human being could not have attained the pleasure of God. Yet further, the work of Christ as mediator is to "illumine human souls, to send the Holy Spirit, to change hearts, to revivify and make us blessed, and to direct, unite, liberate, and protect his church even though he is absent in body."<sup>126</sup> These again are the action of Christ's person as mediator, but only insofar as he is God. For these actions, argues Vermigli, "it

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<sup>123</sup> *LLS*, 179.

<sup>124</sup> *LLS*, 180.

<sup>125</sup> *LLS*, 180.

<sup>126</sup> *LLS*, 180; See Donnelly, "Christological Currents," 190.



was not necessary for our mediator to use the instrument of the humanity.”<sup>127</sup> Being mediator also by his divine nature is further proven in that he mediated salvation also to the Old Testament Fathers.

Vermigli takes up the theme of the *communicatio idiomatum* again. Because the two natures are so tightly united in the Person of Christ, Vermigli argues that Scripture speaks of the communication of idioms or properties of both natures: “[S]ince these two natures come together in one and the same hypostasis or person it easily happens that what is said of one nature is also attributed to the other nature.”<sup>128</sup> As such statements attributing actions to Christ are true because of Christ’s person, but according to his individual natures. In speech such things get mixed together, but should not in the reality of the natures.<sup>129</sup> As regards the particular problem of Christ interceding with the Father, Vermigli argues that this is done insofar as he is man, but not in a way which excludes his divine nature.<sup>130</sup> At first glance this is a fairly cryptic phrase, but Vermigli means by it that no subordinationism of Christ to the Father can be argued. Christ does intercede, but not as one who is lesser, but as one who is equal.<sup>131</sup> Vermigli argues against Stancaro’s interpretation of his favourite text, I Timothy 2:5, by saying that Paul was here focusing on the humanity for pastoral reasons, but not thereby excluding the divinity. Vermigli closes the letter with a passing stab at Brenz’s ubiquitarian Christology and

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<sup>127</sup> *LLS*, 180. Note here the use of the term instrumentality in relation to Christ’s humanity. “Quoniam ad haec non est necesse, ut mediator noster instrumento humanitatis utatur.” *Epistolae Duae*, 5.

<sup>128</sup> *LLS*, 181. “quia in una ea demque hypostasi seu persona illae duae naturae convenient, facile sit, ut quod de una dicitur, de altera quoque praedicetur.” *Epistolae Duae*, 6.

<sup>129</sup> *LLS*, 181.

<sup>130</sup> *LLS*, 181.

<sup>131</sup> *LLS*, 182.

urges the Polish brethren to fend off Stancaro and similar sectarians.<sup>132</sup> It is clear from the preceding overview that although unified in basic content, in Vermigli's letter Chalcedonian Christological dialectic and the *communicatio idiomatum* are much more prominent than in that of Calvin. Calvin, on the other hand, argues more pointedly from the offices of Christ.

These two letters, with those requested from other cities, were made available to the Polish Protestants at an important synodical meeting in September 1560 and a day later 'Stancarism' was unanimously condemned.<sup>133</sup> Yet, a certain noble man, Jerome Ossolinski, read the letters from Geneva and Zurich, examined above, and said they were a fraud written by the anti-Stancarists in Poland to imitate the Swiss theological authorities. Despite the vigorous opposition of the ministers gathered, Ossolinski's proposal for a four month hiatus on debate in order to solicit new letters from Calvin, Beza, Bullinger and Vermigli won the day.<sup>134</sup> Many during these several months wrote the Swiss, including Stancaro himself, to win their confidence. Stancaro wrote an important letter in December 1560 addressed to Wolfgang Musculus, Peter Martyr, Calvin, and Bullinger. With an ingenious plan Stancaro tried to force their choice between his position and the Arianism present in Poland circulating, supposedly, under the names of these Reformed theologians. Stancaro said that the Swiss Arianism was well-known not only among the nobles and ministers of Lesser and Greater Poland, but

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<sup>132</sup> LLS, 183.

<sup>133</sup> Tylanda, "The Controversy," 133.

<sup>134</sup> Wotschke, *Polen*, 185; Tylanda, "The Controversy," 134. Lismanino wrote the Swiss and included with his letter Stancaro's treatise *De officiis Mediatoris, Pontificis et Sacerdotis Domini nostre Iesu Christi et secundum quam naturam haec officia exhibuerit et executus fuerit*. Donnelly, "Christological Currents," 191.

also Lithuania and even Russia! At least he, knowledgeable of the 'real' Swiss position, knew that such charges were not the case. Hence, they should support him (and his position) in his fight against the real Arians.<sup>135</sup> In any case, his position on the Trinity was completely orthodox as well as that on mediation supported by the sixth Council of Constantinople.<sup>136</sup> So, he asked the Swiss theologians to write the Polish nobles and set them straight on his orthodoxy.

Donnelly states the effect clearly, "Write they did, but to condemn him."<sup>137</sup> Informed of Stancaro's ploy, Calvin, for his part, was not going to fall for this set-up.<sup>138</sup> On behalf of the Genevan consistory, he wrote back in March 1561 a much more detailed letter than his first denying both the charges of Arianism and Stancaro's position.<sup>139</sup> In the first letter Calvin must have had only a general appreciation of Stancaro's position, but here we see he has read more clearly of the mediator-in-human-nature-alone position. Hence, the refutation is much more detailed and addresses individual concerns.<sup>140</sup> Interestingly, and in contrast to the first letter what we see is not only biblical evidence, but also clear patristic evidence against Stancaro. Calvin opens by again stating that Christ was the mediator not only after his incarnation, but as *logos* from the beginning. Scripture tells us to believe in Christ (and not in anything in this creation) so this must

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<sup>135</sup> *Calvini opera*, vol. XVIII, 260-262; Tylanda, "The Controversy," 138.

<sup>136</sup> *Calvini opera*, vol. XVIII, 262.

<sup>137</sup> Donnelly, "Christological Currents," 192.

<sup>138</sup> *Calvini opera*, vol. XVIII, 264-267. See Stephen Edmondson, *Calvin's Christology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 16-17.

<sup>139</sup> Tylanda, "The Controversy," 145. See *Calvini Opera*, vol. IX, 357-358.

<sup>140</sup> Tylanda, "The Controversy," 144.

mean Christ is divine. Further, we look to his person in which is also the divine nature which can unite us to the divine and mediate grace.<sup>141</sup> Without divinity, Christ cannot do what he must as mediator. Also, without humanity Christ cannot do what he must as mediator. Both natures are required in the mediator and both are united in the person of Christ. Since Scripture speaks of Christ's mediation sometimes with reference to the person and not always clearly according to the natures, we must make careful use of the communication of idioms in order not to fall into error.<sup>142</sup>

Christ's mediatorship according to two natures, says Calvin, does not imply some sort of inferiority of Christ to the Father, and hence not Arianism. Mediation is not a question of essence, but of the role of Christ in the 'dispensation' of salvation.<sup>143</sup> This 'dispensation' has been accommodated to us by a gracious God for our understanding: we must, with modest minds, accept the revelation of Christ under the veil of his humanity "until the time when Christ in his human nature, and the course of his mediatorship being completed, submits to the Father, and his divine essence and majesty immediately shine forth in splendour."<sup>144</sup> It is precisely this modesty that Stancaro is lacking. In both his use of Scripture (especially the Gospel of John and Pauline texts)

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<sup>141</sup> Edmondson writes "Finally, in the midst of all this talk of natures, the implicit logic in Calvin's discussion is that mediation as an activity is carried out by a person, not by his natures, though this person certainly is only able to carry out this activity on the basis of his natures." Edmondson, *Calvin's Christology*, 31. And again: "Overarching this talk of each nature's necessity in Christ's mediatorial activity is the fact that we speak of these natures only in the complete person of Christ." 34.

<sup>142</sup> Tylenda, "The Controversy," 149-150. See Edmondson, *Calvin's Christology*, 32ff.

<sup>143</sup> Tylenda, "The Controversy," 150.

<sup>144</sup> Tylenda, "The Controversy," 142.

and the Fathers (Calvin cites Augustine, Cyril, Chrysostom and Ambrose) Stancaro's interpretation is wide of the mark.<sup>145</sup>

Vermigli's letter of March 1561 on behalf of the Zurich Church is clearer in structure than Calvin's and is perhaps Martyr's "best single statement on Christology."<sup>146</sup> After expressing displeasure with having been accused of Arianism and Monophysitism, Martyr proceeds to assert his Trinitarian orthodoxy: "We preach, teach, and write just what we believe: there are three divine persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, consubstantial, equal, of the same essence, and just as they are of the same nature, so they also have one will and operation, which however we want to be understood as preserving the properties of the persons."<sup>147</sup> Further, on Christology he also presents his formulation of orthodoxy:

We defend the mystery of the incarnation with no less sincerity, positing two natures in Christ, the human I say, and the divine—conjoined inseparably together as tightly as possible so that in the hypostasis of the Son of God, I mean, of the eternal Word, I say, the nature of man also is borne up and subsists undivided. Neither do we allow their properties to be abolished or mixed or confused because of the intimate joining together of the two natures.<sup>148</sup>

Importantly, Vermigli claims to teach that "it is the person from which actions proceed," so as not to fall into the trap of Nestorius and have two natures acting separately.<sup>149</sup> As such, there is unity of the Person, but nonetheless two wills and two actions—and hence

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<sup>145</sup> Tylanda, "The Controversy," 152. See Edmondson, *Calvin's Christology*, 36.

<sup>146</sup> Donnelly, "Christological Currents," 191.

<sup>147</sup> *LLS*, 200.

<sup>148</sup> *LLS*, 200. "Nec minori synceritate mysterium incarnationis defendimus, ponentes in Christo duas naturas, humanam inquam, et divinam, inseparabiliter quàm arctissimè coniunctas, ita ut in *hypostasis* filii dei, *logos* inquam aeterni, hominis quoque natura indiuulse gestent, et substentet. Nec tamen ob tam intimam coniunctionem duarum naturarum aboleri patimur, aut misceri, seu confundi earum proprietates." *Epistolae Duae*, 13.

<sup>149</sup> *LLS*, 201.

no monothelism.<sup>150</sup> Vermigli, arguing in the name of the Zurich pastors, affirms all the major creeds and early church councils on questions of the Trinity and Christology as being fully in agreement with the teaching of the divinely inspired Scriptures.<sup>151</sup>

Vermigli structures his letter clearly in three sections. First he argues that Christ is a mediator according to both his natures. His main concern here is to show that Christ is also mediator in his divine nature, since he is agreed with Stancaro on the mediation according to the human nature. Nonetheless the natures must be considered conjointly, for mediation cannot happen by either nature taken separately.<sup>152</sup> Here Vermigli clears up a potential misunderstanding from his previous letter.<sup>153</sup> He had referred to the mediatorial action of Christ from the beginning, but this does not mean Christ was incarnate from the beginning. Rather, as regards the Father's view, since all time is present, it did not matter whether these things were already done or were to be done.<sup>154</sup> Christ was mediator in both natures before he was incarnate not because his two natures were really together, "but because they were regarded as joined and linked together in God's knowledge and acceptance [of them]."<sup>155</sup> Hence, salvation was mediated by the whole person of Christ in the Old Testament as well as the New. Stancaro thinks it sufficient that the human nature mediates while God stands near as a helper: "But that is

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<sup>150</sup> *LLS*, 201. Monothelism posits that Christ had only one will.

<sup>151</sup> *LLS*, 202. Nicene, Apostles', and Athanasian Creeds; Councils of Nicaea (325), I Constantinople (381), Ephesus (431), Chalcedon (451), II Constantinople (553), and III Constantinople (680-81).

<sup>152</sup> *LLS*, 203.

<sup>153</sup> Wotschke, *Polen*, 189.

<sup>154</sup> *LLS*, 203. Vermigli cites Heb. 13:8 and Rev. 13:8 as proof for God's extra-temporal view.

<sup>155</sup> *LLS*, 203.

not what happened; God wanted the human nature to be borne in the divine person so that from it the sufferings of Christ might draw upon the juice of its dignity and excellence, not as if from an outside font or root but from the basis or hypostasis in which the human nature that was suffering was inserted.”<sup>156</sup> Any creature could suffer and die, but only God can really complete the process of sanctification.<sup>157</sup>

In a second section Vermigli again fends off the charges of heresy. A first weapon, as is often the case in his writings, is a clear understanding of the *communicatio idiomatum*. Next, he states openly that the three persons of the Trinity are the same essence, but have distinct properties and are indeed distinct persons. One of the properties of the Person of the Son is to mediate and this since the beginning. For example, Vermigli takes up the question of the prayers of Christ before the incarnation:

We answer that the Son can be said to have prayed since the prayers which Christ was going to send up after assuming flesh existed before all eternity in the sight of God, and he was both listening to them and embracing them as most welcome and acceptable. Just as it is written that the slaying of the Lamb took place from the beginning of the world, so also his prayers can be said to have already been poured forth then as regards the Father’s acceptance.<sup>158</sup>

Here again we see the importance of Vermigli’s understanding of God’s atemporality.

Without this, without an understanding of Christ as mediator in his whole person, argues

Vermigli Stancaro ends up with a divided Christ much like many of the early Church

heretics—most notably Nestorius.<sup>159</sup>

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<sup>156</sup> *LLS*, 204.

<sup>157</sup> *LLS*, 204.

<sup>158</sup> *LLS*, 209.

<sup>159</sup> *LLS*, 210.

In the final section of his letter Vermigli asserts that his teaching is in line with that of the Early Church. He finds clear support for his ideas from the 13<sup>th</sup> canon of the Council of Ephesus:

It is stated in canon 13: 'Because the divinity and humanity are together through that sacred and ineffable union of joining together, so we say that Christ has suffered and has risen not because God the Word suffered in his nature or received blows, or piercing by nails, or other wounds. For God is incorporeal and exempt from suffering. But he is said to have suffered all these things because that body which was made his very own underwent this. For God, who could not suffer, was in that body which did suffer,' etc.<sup>160</sup>

Unfortunately, it is difficult to locate this canon for editions of the anathemas of Ephesus contain only twelve.<sup>161</sup> Perhaps Vermigli had a different edition or quoted from memory from the Council document Cyril's *Second Letter to Nestorius*. There Cyril writes:

In a similar way we say that he suffered and rose again, not that the Word of God suffered blows or piercing with nails or any other wounds in his own nature (for the divine, being without a body, is incapable of suffering), but because the body which became his own suffered these things, he is said to have suffered them for us. For he was without suffering, while his body suffered. Something similar is true of his dying. For by nature the Word of God is of itself immortal and incorruptible and life and life-giving, but since on the other hand his own body by God's grace, as the apostle says, tasted death for all, the Word is said to have suffered death for us, not as if he himself had experienced death as far as his own nature was concerned (it would be sheer lunacy to say or to think that), but because, as I have just said, his flesh tasted death. So too, when his flesh was raised to life, we refer to this again as his resurrection, not as though he had fallen into corruption—God forbid—but because his body had been raised again.<sup>162</sup>

<sup>160</sup> LLS, 211. "Ibidem Canone 13. Quia simul sunt divinitas et humanitas per arcanam illam ineffabilémque conpulationis adunationem, sic dicimus Christum passum esse et resurrexisse, non quod deus verbum in sua natura passus sit, aut plagas, aut clauorum transfixiones, aut alia uulnera susceperit..." *Epistolae Duae*, 34.

<sup>161</sup> LLS, 211 n. 294.

<sup>162</sup> J. Migne, *Patrologia Graeca*, vol. 77, 43; See also *The Seven Ecumenical Councils of the Undivided Church*, trans. H.R. Percival, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, ed. Schaff et al. (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1955), vol. xiv, 198.



To say that he quoted from memory (or some such solution) is not entirely satisfying for he had just quoted exactly from the 10<sup>th</sup> anathema of the Council. As such it would seem that Vermigli had a different edition which had a different numbering system.

In any event, Vermigli's case is made by mining the thoughts of Irenaeus, Cyril, Chrysostom, and especially Augustine to show that the divine nature was in Christ as he died on the cross. Whatever the differences among the Fathers, Vermigli argues "it is enough to have shown from their works that they did not withdraw Christ's divinity from his office as mediator and did not restrict it within the limits of his humanity alone."<sup>163</sup> Vermigli argued that Lombard, over against the Fathers, did not understand Christology correctly. Such argument was important for Stancaro had used Lombard as a central theological voice against his detractors. Famously Stancaro had written "Peter Lombard is worth more than a hundred Luthers, two hundred Melanchthons, three hundred Bullingers, four hundred Peter Martyrs and five hundred Calvins, and all of them ground in a mortar with a pestle would not amount to an ounce of true theology."<sup>164</sup> Nonetheless, Vermigli noted, the fine distinction drawn from Lombard between the middle-man and a mediator is made by other scholastics (certainly not all, says Vermigli) in order to "escape by a sophism the arguments and statements of the Fathers, which were crushing them."<sup>165</sup> The Polish Church, then, should be advised to put a stop to the sophistical teaching of Stancaro and "preach frequently and earnestly that there are three distinct persons in the one divine essence who, however, are equal and consubstantial and that

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<sup>163</sup> *LLS*, 217.

<sup>164</sup> Quoted in Tylenda, "The Controversy," 141.

<sup>165</sup> *LLS*, 218. "Eam stropham illi sibi fabricarunt, ut per eam et rationes et Patrum sententias, quibus opprimebantur, sophisticè possent eludere." *Epistolae Duae*, 48.

there are two natures in Christ which are indeed distinct in their properties and are nonetheless united as closely as possibly in the same hypostasis.”<sup>166</sup>

### C. Against the Ubiquity of the Human Nature in Brenz

By far the most well-known and sustained example of Chalcedonian logic in Vermigli's thought is the *Dialogue on the Two Natures in Christ* written against the Lutheran Johannes Brenz' work on the union of the two natures in Christ. Brenz wrote his *De personali unione duarum naturarum in Christo* in opposition to a Reformed Christology which he saw as pulling the two natures apart.<sup>167</sup> Most critically, however, his aim was to preserve the real corporeal presence of Christ in the Eucharist.<sup>168</sup> He did this by saying that the union of the two natures in the person of Christ was so tight that what the one nature has the other must necessarily have.<sup>169</sup> The human nature has a presence in the Eucharist for it is intimately united with the divine nature in the person of Christ. In the Eucharist we find the whole person of Christ, and since the person cannot be without the two natures, both natures both must therefore be present. The power of the human nature to be present comes not from itself, but from the divine nature with

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<sup>166</sup> LLS, 220.

<sup>167</sup> Johannes Brenz, *De Personali Unione Duarum Naturarum in Christo... Qua vera Corporis et Sanguinis Christi Paresentia in Coena explicata est* (Tübingen, 1556). A modern critical edition is found in J. Brenz, *Die christologischen Schriften*, Part 1, ed. Theodor Mahlmann (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1981), 3-107.

<sup>168</sup> “veritate horum verborum Christi: ‘Hoc est corpus meum.’” Brenz, *De Personali Unione*, 10

<sup>169</sup> “Quid ergo hinc sequitur? Quid dicemus? An non perspicuum est, quod cum deitas et humanitas in una persona Christi inseparabiliter et indivulse coniunguntur, necessarium sit, ut ibicunque est deitas, ibi etiam sit humanitas Christi? Certe nici hae duae naturae sic semper unitae in Christo maneant, ut altera nusquam sit sine altera, fieri non potest, ut Christus una maneant persona. Si enim deitas Christi alicubi est sine humanitate eius, duae erunt personae, non una,” Brenz, *De Personali Unione*, 18.

which it is united in hypostatic union.<sup>170</sup> This presence is not a local presence, but the ineffable and heavenly omnipresence of the divinity.<sup>171</sup>

Vermigli had been watching this renewed debate between the Lutherans and the Reformed for a few years already, even suffering the disapproval of many Lutherans during his second stay in Strasbourg, but he finally joined the debate with a dialogue responding to these ideas of Brenz.<sup>172</sup> The dialogue pits *Pantachus* or ‘everywhere’ representing Brenz against *Orothetes* as ‘Boundary setter’ representing Vermigli. Although Brenz’ work is not named directly,<sup>173</sup> the critical notes in John Patrick Donnelly’s English edition point out that most of *Pantachus*’ remarks for the first two thirds of the *Dialogue* are direct quotes from Brenz’ 1561 work.<sup>174</sup> It seems Vermigli wanted to attack the argument and not the person.<sup>175</sup> Vermigli’s response is important for some note that Vermigli’s *Dialogue* is clearer in argument than the writings of other scholars responding to Brenz’ work.<sup>176</sup>

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<sup>170</sup> “ut quod ille est per se et natura, hoc iste sit per accidens, hoc est alieno beneficio et gratia propter hypostaticam unionem.” Brenz, *De Personali Unione*, 24; “Sic etiam idiomata *tau logou* seu Dei verbi praedicantur non verbis tantum inanibus, sed etiam vere et re ipsa de carne Christi. Sola deitas est vivifica et tamen etiam caro Christi est vivifica habetque vim vivificam, non quidem e sua carnis natura, sed ex natura deitatis, cui personaliter est unita.” Brenz, *De Personali Unione*, 34.

<sup>171</sup> “et nos supra docuimus humanitatem Christi non esse ubique locali extensione, sed tantum eo ineffabili et coelesti modo, quo est deitati hypostatice et inseparabiliter unita,” Brenz, *De Personali Unione*, 48.

<sup>172</sup> Donnelly, in *DIAL*, xvi.

<sup>173</sup> See Vermigli’s letter (23 August 1561) to Bishop Parkhurst in the 1583 *CP* Appendix, 149. In this letter, which accompanies a copy of the *Dialogus* he admits that he is *Orothetes* and Brenz is *Pantachus*.

<sup>174</sup> Donnelly, in *DIAL*, xvii.

<sup>175</sup> In a letter to John Jewel, Vermigli notes: “Next I want you to know that when you read my work, your gentle soul will not be offended: I have eliminated all insults, stinging remarks, and angry words. I have not even mentioned my opponent’s name since I would prefer to see him corrected and repentant than condemned and derided. I see myself as the enemy of error, nor the erring. Debate over truth should not in my opinion harm one’s opponent.” Anderson, *Peter Marty, A Reformer in Exile*, 523.

<sup>176</sup> Brandy, *Brenz*, 70.

To refute Brenz' argument a central theme in the work is the protection of the integrity of the properties of the human nature of Christ. Several comments by Donnelly are helpful here. First, we see in this dispute between Brenz and Vermigli that the disagreement over the Eucharist has moved from disputing over the institution narratives in Scripture, to the foundational issues of Christology and the authority of the early Church Fathers.<sup>177</sup> Both the Lutherans and Reformed, not to mention the Council of Trent, accepted the Early Church councils of Ephesus (431) and Chalcedon (451) as authoritative. The Lutherans had tried to pin the Reformed with the charge of Nestorianism—a charge which Vermigli is quick to refute, as we shall see. Secondly, it is interesting to note the acknowledgement, but 'mild contempt' with which Vermigli treated the later medieval scholastics.<sup>178</sup> At several points both he and Brenz used arguments or distinctions from Scholastics which were helpful to their cause. This case is interesting for they brush off the authority of the scholastics while nonetheless still appreciating their fine distinctions.<sup>179</sup>

Once again, Vermigli's main concern is to guard the integrity of the human nature of Christ. First, he asserts that a human nature is bodily, and to be a real body it must have place. Vermigli musters evidence from Aristotle and Augustine to show that a real body must exist locally. Using Aristotle and Augustine, he argues that without locality

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<sup>177</sup> Donnelly, in *DIAL*, xxi-xxii.

<sup>178</sup> Donnelly, in *DIAL*, xxii. See also Brandy, *Brenz*, 77ff. for support and furthering of the earlier work of Donnelly's ideas in *Calvinism and Scholasticism*.

<sup>179</sup> See, for example, this comment by *Orothetes*: "You strongly assert that the scholastics are on your side, but it turns out that they oppose you bitterly. I haven't been able to strip away from them their sophistical, barbarous, and filthy vocabulary, but I don't doubt that I still have understood them skilfully and correctly. Therefore I appeal to all their schools as judges and witnesses." *DIAL*, 105. See also pp. 13 and 99.

the body is nothing.<sup>180</sup> A ubiquitous body is simply word-play:<sup>181</sup> “That’s nothing but heaping one nonsense on another. It comes down to your saying that the body is in a place but not locally. Using such logic one might also say that you are human but not humanly, you are learned men but not learnedly, wise men but not at all wisely.”<sup>182</sup> Such words are a fundamental contradiction which would completely undermine the true humanity of Christ.

Brenz had mentioned in his work that such an appeal to Aristotle showed the confusion of Vermigli’s sources. The use of Aristotle by his opponents showed that they were working with simple pagan logic and not the Spirit.<sup>183</sup> Brenz countered that the logic of this mystery is not to be understood by the human intellect through its rationality, but rather by faith through the Holy Spirit.<sup>184</sup> Vermigli would have none of this argument. Positing that Christ’s body was local was not based on pagan philosophy alone (and Vermigli agrees with Aristotle on the definition of place) but because of what Christ said about himself. Christ said he had a local human body in that he would actually be leaving the disciples to go to heaven.<sup>185</sup>

An important implication of this argument in Vermigli is that heaven must also be local.<sup>186</sup> This is perhaps one of the most intriguing parts of the *Dialogue. Pantachus*, the

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<sup>180</sup> *DIAL*, 113.

<sup>181</sup> *DIAL*, 49.

<sup>182</sup> *DIAL*, 18.

<sup>183</sup> Brenz, *De Personali Unione*, 6.

<sup>184</sup> “Non capit hoc mysterium humanus intellectus per suas rationes, capit autem fides per spiritum sanctum,” Brenz, *De Personali Unione*, 22.

<sup>185</sup> *DIAL*, 115.

<sup>186</sup> *DIAL*, 111ff.

voice of Brenz, has a very interesting exchange with *Orothetes*, the voice of Vermigli, on the actual place of heaven. *Pantachus* claims that *Orothetes* is chaining Christ up to some corner of the heavens, but *Orothetes* retorts that *Pantachus*' vision of heaven is distorted. Christ is certainly not chained up in some corner of the visible heavens, but in a region beyond which certainly cannot be termed 'corners' or 'tiny huts.'<sup>187</sup> A fundamental problem in Brenz' argument, argues Vermigli, is his misunderstanding of the place of heaven.<sup>188</sup>

The place of heaven is in fact an important and difficult aspect of Vermigli's theology. Not only is it important for guarding the humanity of Christ as mediator, but it is also important for understanding the true presence of Christ in the Eucharist. The *res* of the sacrament was not to be sought after 'on this earth' but 'in heaven.' To do this the Spirit of God was present in the celebration of the sacrament and lifted the believer's heart to the presence of Christ. More of the contours of this doctrine will be presented below in chapter five, but suffice it here to say that it was this lifting to the place of heaven that allowed Reformed theologians to speak of a *true* presence of Christ in the Eucharist. Christ in his two natures was only present locally in heaven, so for the faithful to feed on him truly they must ascend to where he is. This can only happen through the *sursum corda* emphasized in Reformed theology.<sup>189</sup> This idea is often and mistakenly seen as the specifically Calvinist position on the Eucharist. The reality is that it finds its place in a much broader circle of Reformers—as it is here in Vermigli.

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<sup>187</sup> *DIAL*, 117.

<sup>188</sup> *DIAL*, 46.

<sup>189</sup> See McLelland, *Visible Words of God*, 83ff.

Most importantly, Vermigli counters the arguments based on the communication of proper qualities (*communicatio idiomatum*). Certain properties can be said to be exchanged, but only those which can be possibly borne by a real human nature (immortality, light and glory). Others, such as eternity, immensity and, most pertinently, ubiquity cannot be properly communicated because a real humanity such as is in Christ cannot receive them.<sup>190</sup> Vermigli, does admit that these latter are sometimes admitted in Scripture, but this is not a *real* communication of proper qualities between the two natures, but only *verbal* and in the person of Christ. What Scripture admits is therefore true and should be accepted because it is speaking of the *person* of Christ. For example, when Scripture speaks of Christ as God it is most certainly true of his person, but not true of his two natures. He is God with regard to his divine nature, but not his human nature.<sup>191</sup> In this way Vermigli avoids the charge of Nestorianism. On the other hand, he fires back at Brenz with the charge of monophysite heresy. Because Brenz allows this *communicatio idiomatum* between the abstract natures and not only the concrete person, he has created a fusion of natures, or ironically, even worse, a form of Nestorianism with two independent natures.<sup>192</sup>

Hurtful for Brenz' position are the arguments mustered by Vermigli from his fellow-Lutheran Melanchthon. Brenz is careful in his work to enlist the support of Luther. Now Vermigli is using the mature comments of one of Luther's most important disciples against his opponent. Vermigli postulates that he might listen to this very

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<sup>190</sup> *DIAL*, 50.

<sup>191</sup> *DIAL*, 60.

<sup>192</sup> *DIAL*, 23.

learned and holy man rather than others, like Zwingli or Oecolampadius, regardless of their wisdom.<sup>193</sup> He writes why Melanchthon is so important:

For you usually get so worked up over the names of these holy men that you would rather have the dung devil mentioned than suffer the mention of their names, however illustrious they are. But you can't be disgusted with Philip. Once he was no mean defender of your doctrine on the sacramentarian question. Finally, he was overcome by the truth, and being such an authentic person, he was not ashamed to profess what he thought about your ubiquity.<sup>194</sup>

Vermigli then proceeds to cite several passages from late writings of Melanchthon which prove that the Son of God is actually in heaven interceding with the Father. In a response to the question of the Elector Palatinate, Melanchthon as quoted by Vermigli argues that conversion, transubstantiation, and ubiquity are all human inventions unknown to the Fathers.<sup>195</sup>

In the end, Vermigli argues that communicating the property of ubiquity to the human nature of Christ does not actually bring more spiritual comfort. With this claim he aims to counter the most powerful argument of Brenz. Brenz argues that having the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist (though certainly not by way of transubstantiation) brings an assurance that is not available in the sacramentarian conception.<sup>196</sup> Vermigli counters by arguing that it is not such a crass presence of Christ in the Eucharist that brings comfort, but the Holy Spirit and the knowledge that Christ in his whole person is interceding for the sinner at the right hand of God. In fact, this spiritual bond is

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<sup>193</sup> *DIAL*, 164.

<sup>194</sup> *DIAL*, 165.

<sup>195</sup> *DIAL*, 165. See also Vermigli's letter to Calvin 29 August 1557. Vermigli cites Melanchthon's commentary on Colossians as faithfully saying that the human nature of Christ is properly in heaven and upholding Augustine's claim that Christ is in a certain place in his body. Further, Melanchthon says there is no allegory in the word 'heaven.' Vermigli claims this clearly shows that the Ubiquitists are in error. As such, Melanchthon should make this teaching more public. *CP*, Appendix, 102.



something much closer than any physical bond which could be argued through the doctrine of ubiquity. Such a bond does not come through eating the physical Christ here on earth, but communing with him spiritually through faith.

#### IV. Conclusion: Vermigli and the Heretics

Up to this point we have presented an historical survey of the major Christological writings of Vermigli. A central theme has certainly been the careful interpretation of the union of the two natures in Christ, and the guarding in particular of the integrity of the human nature in Christ. Across all his writings it is interesting that Vermigli tries to uphold patristic orthodoxy. In almost all of his writings he seeks to secure the support of the Orthodox Fathers and place his opponents in or near the camp of the heretics. This fact is interesting for it raises the issue of Vermigli's sense of the progress of Ecclesiastical history. One gets the profound sense that not only does Vermigli *know* the Church Fathers very well, but he *feels* himself to be somehow in their midst. This is not to say that he felt his voice to be as important as theirs; rather, it means that he felt personally responsible to fight for the correct interpretation of the Fathers. In a certain sense perhaps he felt that this is one of the unspoken aspects of his calling. He desperately wanted to preserve the biblically sound doctrines of the Fathers over against the proliferation of 'new' ideas. Vermigli warns his readers that they should fear novelty: "But in the Gospell, newness must speciallie be shunned, and therefore he testifieth in everie place, that the Gospell is ancient, and was ordained of God from the beginning."<sup>197</sup>

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<sup>196</sup> *DIAL*, 185.

<sup>197</sup> *CP*, I, 99.

Not only in the Gospels, but also in the Prophets altering the ancient testimony is to be guarded against: "Wherefore there is no cause why men should attempt to alter anie thing in his word."<sup>198</sup> Vermigli's opponents and even modern commentators on Vermigli's thought might question the real 'unoriginality' of Vermigli (one could certainly point to the dynamic originality of his theological method), but Vermigli's desire for an unoriginal orthodoxy is nonetheless clear.

Such sentiment does not say, however that Vermigli felt the Fathers were always right; rather they were certainly closer to the truth than many of his theologically novel opponents. On the one hand we see in Vermigli a profound understanding of the vast history of the Church. His is not a second-hand knowledge of certain patristic quotations, but a first-hand knowledge of the texts. On the other we see him working within a remarkable simplicity—there are the orthodox, thinks Vermigli, guarding Christology in the middle and the heretics pulling individual properties of Christ to either side. In the preface to his Romans commentary, Vermigli makes observations about the extreme interpretations of the ceremonies of the Law which strikingly show this middle course:

...one is of the Ebionites and others; which Jewishly sought to ioyn of necessity the ceremonies of Moses to Christ. Contrariwise the other extreme error is of the Marcionites, which affirmed that the old law was not given of a good God, but of an evil governer, the maker of this world. We saile in the midst betwene these extremities, and affirme, that now after Christ, the ceremonies of the law are not still to be kept, when as theyr time is now expired.<sup>199</sup>

Sailing in the midst between two extremes seems to be a consistent theme in Vermigli's theology.

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<sup>198</sup> *CP*, I, 99.

<sup>199</sup> 'Preface,' *ROM*, B ii r.

Vermigli was conscious that the early church heresies were not only in the early church, but were always present. Donnelly nicely summarizes the varieties of heresy of his time against which Vermigli thought it fit to fight:

Christological heresies usually fit nicely into one of three camps: the Arians, the Nestorians, and the Monophysites/Eutychians. Martyr in his *Dialogus* classifies Brenz's teaching on the ubiquity of Christ's body as Monophysite because it misuses the communication of idioms; by attributing divine ubiquity to Christ's human body Brenz was destroying the integrity of his human nature. The Anabaptist teaching about Christ's heavenly flesh seems at first sight Nestorian. Nestorius first came under fire for denying that Mary was the mother or bearer of God. The Anabaptist teaching about heavenly flesh seems an emphatic denial that Mary was the mother of God. Yet on a deeper level the doctrine has Monophysite roots: the divine nature by providing heavenly flesh destroys the integrity of Christ's human nature even more fundamentally than does extending the divine ubiquity to Christ's body.<sup>200</sup>

To this list should be added the docetic Christologies represented in many of the Spiritualist or Anabaptist radicals. Recognizing the presence of these heresies, Vermigli was ever-vigilant to expose them and point them out for what they were. Not only were they errors, but were condemnable and led only to damnation. Even more profoundly, they were instruments of the Devil and worked directly against the truth of the orthodox Gospel.<sup>201</sup>

Many examples could be found, but one would be helpful here. When writing to the London Strangers' Church<sup>202</sup> he shows the contemporary relevance of correct teaching: "Under this weak and remiss censure of Adriaan not only Arius but countless other heretics will fill the church with their heresies and there will be so great a cesspool

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<sup>200</sup> Donnelly, "Christological Currents," 186.

<sup>201</sup> *LLS*, 197.

<sup>202</sup> See *LLS*, 191-93.

of sects in the body of Christ that everything will turn out unclean and filthy.”<sup>203</sup> In this same letter he warns against theological novelty: “Hence after putting aside this novel doctrine, let us reflect that we should use every means to promote quiet and peace in the church. We have quite enough of intricate and vain questions.”<sup>204</sup> Finally, at the end of this letter he goes even further by portraying the battle in cosmic proportions: “The devil cannot put up with this and for that reason has stirred up among you discords and contentions over these matters so that foreigners may be made more and more unwelcome and hateful to the English. Stand guard then with the greatest care and alertness lest the devil attain his wish and the Church of the Son of God suffer harm.”<sup>205</sup>

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<sup>203</sup> *LLS*, 193.

<sup>204</sup> *LLS*, 196.

<sup>205</sup> *LLS*, 197.

## CHAPTER IV

### Holy Scripture: The Audible Words of God

For God hath framed unto us winges of his spirite and woord:  
but if through our own default we become fleshy and heavy,  
we shal not be caryed up into heaven, but together with beastes  
bee drawen downewarde.<sup>1</sup>

#### I. Introduction

Peter Martyr's main task as Protestant Reformer was to serve as professor of Scripture. In a speech before his students in Zurich he explained his motivations and the understanding of his work:

I do not approve of the great desire for seclusion and solitude of some of the Fathers since humans are not made for that; neither do I regard the law of God as allowing that. This alone I desired: that in the holy fellowship of the Church I may share with others what I am ever able to acquire by my work and study. Second, that you may understand that this has always been the main goal of all my plans: that I may devote all my work to explaining the divine letters.<sup>2</sup>

We see here that Vermigli's handling of Scripture was a very public affair. Further, virtually all of Martyr's literary output (save his commentary on Aristotle's *Nichomachean Ethics*) arose out of his commentary on Scripture.<sup>3</sup> As such he had a great deal to say publicly about the importance and the interpretation of the Word of God.

Importantly, Vermigli did not only talk and write publicly about the work of interpreting individual words or texts, but also about the methods and presuppositions of a good interpreter. He was not only interested in philology (as important as he found this

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<sup>1</sup> *JUD*, Bii v.

<sup>2</sup> *LLS*, 327.

<sup>3</sup> John L. Thompson, "The survival of allegorical argumentation in Peter Martyr Vermigli's Old Testament exegesis," in *Biblical interpretation in the era of the Reformation*, eds. Richard A. Muller and John L. Thompson (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 256.

work), but also in the larger theological and theoretical questions behind the work of exegesis. Martyr's thoughts on the subject were not compartmentalized: many links can be found with other areas of his thought. Throughout his commentaries on the Scriptures Vermigli guards the rightful place of the outward instrument. The outward instrument in Christ's person was his human nature; the outward instrument of the audible Words of God is the written text of Scripture. The analogical link that Martyr makes between the incarnate Word of God in Christ and the audible Words of God in Scripture is highly significant. Interestingly, as in his Christology, Vermigli is again preoccupied with defining the correct place of the 'human nature' with respect to the audible words of Scripture. On the one hand, he does not want to give Scripture too much power in the work of salvation and, on the other, he does not want to take its God-given instrumental power away. He again wishes above all to find what he considers the middle—the orthodox—way.

Despite the fact that the majority of Vermigli's literary corpus is direct commentary on Scripture, his ideas about Scripture have been comparatively little studied. Certain recent studies have done much to further research in this area, but much work remains to be done.<sup>4</sup> Most of all, Vermigli's often bulky commentaries need to be read closely and compared for hermeneutical influences and important recurring themes. In this chapter, however, we will take a step back from studying his actual commentary on

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<sup>4</sup> See McLelland, *Visible Words of God*, Pt. I; Thompson, "The Survival of Allegorical Argumentation," 255-271; James, "Vermigli, Peter Martyr," 239-245; Shute's introduction to *LAM*, xv-lxiv; Jin Young Kim, "The Exegetical Method and Message of Peter Martyr Vermigli's Commentary on Judges," (Ph.D. diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2002); Muller, *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics*, Vol. 2, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed.; Wulfert de Greef, "Petrus Martyr Vermigli (1500-1562)," in his *'De Ware Uitleg': Hervormers en hun verklaring van de Bijbel* (Leiden: Uitgeverij J.J. Groen en Zoon, 1995), 176-184; See also various essays in Campi, James and Opitz, eds., *Vermigli: Humanism Republicanism, Reformation and James*, ed. *Peter Martyr Vermigli and the European Reformations*.

the text of Scripture to talk about his method for preparing to study and preach Scripture. Interestingly, his methodological presuppositions for studying Scripture are similar to and informed by the factors analogous to those which we saw in his discussion of Christology.

As we have seen with respect to Christology in the previous chapter and shall see on the Eucharist in the following, we see Vermigli commenting on Scripture and the methods for approaching it in all the stages of his career as a Reformer. The documents that concern us most in this chapter are the introductions to his biblical commentaries, speeches on Scripture in the context of encouraging theological education, and direct extended comments scattered in his commentaries on Scripture or pastoral ministry. The introductions to several of his biblical commentaries are extremely helpful in understanding Vermigli's hermeneutical method. For this aspect of our inquiry we have examined his commentaries on Genesis, Judges, Romans, and I Corinthians. These commentary introductions represent different stages in Vermigli's career, but all clearly reveal important connecting themes in Vermigli's hermeneutical task.

Not only did he write about his method and influences in these commentary introductions, but on a number of occasions he spoke publicly about the method of a theologian. In his successive teaching assignments at Oxford, Strasbourg and Zurich Vermigli set out to encourage his students in their theological education and instruct them in the proper method of interpretation.<sup>5</sup> Three times at Oxford and once at both

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<sup>5</sup> Five orations on theological education can be found in *LC*. The sixteenth century English translation in *CP*. A modern English translation in *LLS*, 277-334: 'Exhortation for Youths to Study Sacred Letters' 277-286, 'Encomium of the Word of God Handed Down in the Scriptures and an Exhortation to Study Them' 287-299, 'Oration or Sermon From the Second Chapter of Malachi on the Usefulness and Dignity of the Ministry' 300-308, 'Oration to the Strasbourg Academy, on the Study of Theology' 309-320, 'Inaugural Oration at Zurich When He Took the Place of Doctor Konrad Pellican' 321-334. Although the careful English translation of Donnelly is cited in this chapter, the pagination of the Latin original can be found in Donnelly's work.

Strasbourg and Zurich, Vermigli answered the popular objections to the ministry and called his students to faithful service. Although these documents were written years apart, it is evident that each builds upon its predecessor. He was quite cognizant in his final lecture not to repeat tired, old arguments: he did not want his speech to be like distasteful “recooked cabbage.”<sup>6</sup> But his building on the last was not only a thematic building. At certain points he borrowed directly from the previous speech. John Patrick Donnelly, the editor and translator of the texts into modern English, notes some of the most obvious. The last page of his oration at Strasbourg is identical to a page out of his second Oxford lecture.<sup>7</sup> Further, the final material from his lecture at Zurich borrows heavily from material given at Strasbourg.<sup>8</sup> This self-borrowing shows that the lectures are closely related historically. Vermigli defends his repetition: “Hence we too will possess that deeper pleasure and delight the more fully we celebrate the excellence of the divine wisdom by our oration.”<sup>9</sup> Vermigli’s position was that Scripture was best understood and most effective when continually studied.

## **II. Scripture and God’s Will**

### **A. The Freedom and Choice of God**

Vermigli’s concerns when dealing with Scripture are much like those encountered with Christology. Indeed, he speaks of written scripture much like he speaks of the incarnation of Christ. In fact, the link between incarnate Word and written Word is very

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<sup>6</sup> *LLS*, 312.

<sup>7</sup> Donnelly, in *LLS*, 320 n. 374.

<sup>8</sup> Donnelly, in *LLS*, 333 n. 404.

<sup>9</sup> *LLS*, 312.



close. As such, his comments on the written word tell us much about his overall theological concerns. The written word has an integral place in the history of salvation and the working out of God's will. What we see is a sovereign God who by the working of his Spirit and the outward instrument of Scripture, brings about the salvation of his people. God can bring about salvation without the written Word (as he can even without knowledge of the incarnate Christ), but does not ordinarily do so.

In the first instance, Vermigli is very cognizant to speak of the gift of Scripture. Scripture is not simply a neutral record of what God has done, but is powerful and useful in the lives of Christians.<sup>10</sup> We began this chapter with one of the most literarily interesting quotes from Vermigli: "For God hath framed unto us winges of his spirite and woord: but if through our own default we become fleshy and heavy, we shal not be caryed up into heaven, but together with beastes bee drawen downewarde."<sup>11</sup> This phrase certainly encapsulates many of the main themes of this chapter, but at this point particularly shows the importance of the Word for the believer. In this instance the gift of Scripture is characterized tellingly as 'winges.' Not only is the Spirit of God that which brings up, but also the Word. From the human point of view, the pair is together necessary for the way to heaven.

God is completely free from necessity outside of his own will. Just as the incarnation of the Word was not externally necessary to God, so the revelation of God in Scripture is not necessary apart from his will. Vermigli is adamant about the freedom of God in relation to all things created: "We do not hold God to be suited and bound to be

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<sup>10</sup> See *EW*, 71.

<sup>11</sup> *JUD*, B ii v.

subject to anything, but we ascribe to him the highest power to act.”<sup>12</sup> This, however, does not leave the inscription of the revelation to an arbitrary willing by God or to some order of action that humans cannot recognize. Rather, the revelation of God in Scripture is seen to be supremely reflective of his being and in harmony with the best of the created order. As such the elect see Scripture not only as the bald will of a sovereign God but as a gift of the great goodness of a merciful God.<sup>13</sup> The Words of Scripture are considered ‘apt’, ‘most effectual’, and ‘profitable to teach.’<sup>14</sup>

Importantly, Vermigli makes the distinction between the ordinary and the extraordinary working of God. He often admits that the elect can be saved outside of the explicit reading of the Word. He writes, “He could have redeemed us by a single word, just as he created the world. He refused, so that we could understand his love.”<sup>15</sup> Further, a thesis in his Strasbourg lectures on the Pentateuch states “On occasion some are called through extraordinary power.”<sup>16</sup> Perhaps the most helpful example is Vermigli’s discussion of the classic example of God’s working among those who are outside the realm of civilization and knowledge of the written word.<sup>17</sup> He remarks that these men are damned by both original and their own sin; although such damnation will be not as

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<sup>12</sup> *GEN*, 2v. “Sed nobis haec nihil officiunt: nam non ponimus Deum natum aptumue ad aliquid patiendum, verum illi summam vim ad agendum tribuimus: neque etsi Deus in sua aeternitate destinavit se mundum esse facturum, quando fecit, ideo in illo subsequitur aliqua propositi aut voluntatis mutatio.”

<sup>13</sup> *CP*, II.598; *EW*, 70.

<sup>14</sup> *CP*, II.598.

<sup>15</sup> *LLS*, 245.

<sup>16</sup> *EW*, 130.

<sup>17</sup> *CP*, IV.3; See Martyr’s Proposition 8 section 32 “Sometimes nature is the medium or instrument of divine vocation.” *EW*, 130.

terrible as to those with full knowledge. Nonetheless, writes Vermigli, God by his mercy might indeed reveal Christ to them without the aid of outward ministry. Yet, this revelation is not due to any of their own merit. Vermigli is clear to rule out any sort of late-medieval understanding of merit. He specifically rules out the ideas of the ‘sophists’ of doing *quod in se est* as merit of congruity.<sup>18</sup> Vermigli’s Augustinian anthropology would not allow any human basis for merit. The only basis of this extraordinary working of God to salvation is his mercy.

Ordinarily salvation is made known by the Word of God. The Spirit can work outside of the Word, but normally works through the Word. Vermigli writes of this work of the Spirit: “From the inward moving of the Spirit we receive two special gifts: first, we know the bounty and mercy offered us by God; second, coming to know this we are delighted by it, agree to it, and receive it. This ordinarily happens in connection with the hearing of the Word of God. It reveals a mercy that, for the sake of Christ, graciously releases us from sins.”<sup>19</sup> This ordinary working of the Spirit is also echoed in a response of Vermigli to Brenz. Through the character Orothetes Vermigli says:

Pantachus, I don’t attribute such power to external things, seeing that our faith is God’s work, and is provided exclusively by the Spirit of Christ. Sometimes he works in our souls completely without instruments by himself, either begetting faith or inflaming a languishing faith. But for the most part and in the usual way he uses the external word and the Sacraments so that the elect may be powerfully moved to attain heavenly goods.<sup>20</sup>

This thought of Orothetes is helpful to underline this idea of the normally chosen means of grace posited by Vermigli.

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<sup>18</sup> *CP*, IV.3; See also *ROM*, 159v; *PJ*, 125-126; Oberman, *The Harvest*, 132ff.

<sup>19</sup> *EW*, 70.

<sup>20</sup> *DIAL*, 190.

Analogous to the incarnation, the chosen and normal means of the written Word are not simply coldly arbitrary, but understandable and comforting. God's plan was not only stored up in his secret will before all worlds, but at the convenient time was revealed through prophets and the Holy Scriptures in fitting words accommodated to a human understanding. Normally speaking, the truths of God are too amazing to express with limited human abilities: the mysteries surpass our capacity to understand. Yet, the Holy Ghost, by his mercy, has set forth in Scripture words 'of terrestrial felicitie' which can agree with the capacity of men.<sup>21</sup> These words of the mercy and comfort of God, says Vermigli, are most profitable to teach.<sup>22</sup> The comfort of the message of Scripture is most tellingly shown in the gift of Jesus Christ. Vermigli presumes that God could have sent in Christ's stead an angel or archangel, but this would not have shown the love of God. Rather, God gave of himself in Christ to suffer a most bitter death on the cross. Christ's death and most holy life are to be set forth for human beings to follow.<sup>23</sup> This setting forth happens in Scripture and is preached by ministers and received through the channel of attentive ears.<sup>24</sup> As such, the message is not simply arbitrary, but something that can be understood and appreciated as gracious and loving.<sup>25</sup>

In commenting on visions in Judges 6, Vermigli makes the role of Scripture clear in the human understanding of God. He begins by affirming that the nature, substance, and essence of God cannot be reached by the outward senses: God's essence is not

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<sup>21</sup> *CP*, II.597.

<sup>22</sup> *CP*, II.598.

<sup>23</sup> *CP*, II.610.

<sup>24</sup> *EW*, 70.

<sup>25</sup> *CP*, II.611; *LAM*, 4.

capable of being grasped.<sup>26</sup> Yet in the Old Testament, the Holy Spirit with the help of angels would sometimes reveal himself to the imagination of human beings.<sup>27</sup> Much more vividly, in the New Testament the Church confesses that the very God appeared in the nature of man. Indeed, in this New Testament era the Church confesses a greater vision of God, but in the Old Testament era there was yet a lesser, but nonetheless true vision of God.<sup>28</sup> Contrary to Aristotle, who according to Vermigli denies that dreams come from God, Vermigli claims that God can use all sorts of means to make his will known.<sup>29</sup>

Vermigli clearly argues for God as the author and principal cause of Scripture. Although unfortunate for some modern exegetes, the fact that Vermigli posits Scripture's principal author as God is foundational for his exegesis.<sup>30</sup> The inspired writers of Scripture were certainly necessary instruments, but the power and truth of Scripture rests nonetheless on divine inspiration.<sup>31</sup>

## **B. Providence, Predestination and the Printed Word**

Vermigli's comments on scripture can be helpfully understood in the context of his interpretation of providence and predestination. Two very interesting debates have arisen concerning Vermigli's comments on the more general subjects of providence and

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<sup>26</sup> *CP*, I.24.

<sup>27</sup> *CP*, I.25.

<sup>28</sup> *CP*, I.26.

<sup>29</sup> *CP* I.37. See *PW*, 155ff. for specific references to Aristotle.

<sup>30</sup> Thomas Krüger, "Peter Martyr Vermigli's Hermeneutik," 227 and 231.

predestination among contemporary scholars. First, a high-level discussion has occurred surrounding Vermigli's position in late-medieval and reformation thinking on the subject. John Patrick Donnelly and Richard Muller have given important initial contributions to the discussion of Vermigli as a Protestant Scholastic and his use of theological terminology. Their respective discussions of predestination in Vermigli's thought were reflected in their larger exploration of the place and importance of Vermigli within the phenomenon of protestant scholasticism.<sup>32</sup> Frank James' substantive contribution sought to further this effort by proving that Vermigli was an inheritor of an intensified Augustinianism best represented in Gregory of Rimini's predestinarian thought.<sup>33</sup> Vermigli frequently cites Augustine as a source for his theology in general and his doctrines of grace and predestination in particular.<sup>34</sup> Yet James argues that Vermigli is not simply Augustinian, but a sort of intensified Augustinian following the thought of Gregory. One aspect of his argument is that Vermigli does not include predestination under the rubric of providence as did Thomas Aquinas. Vermigli, argues James, follows closely the thinking of Gregory of Rimini at all the key junctures in his thought.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> *EW*, 114.

<sup>32</sup> Donnelly, *Calvinism and Scholasticism*, 131ff. and Muller, *Christ and the Decree*, 57ff.; See James' history of the debate, "Such are the main perspectives on Vermigli's doctrine of predestination. Despite the fact that these scholars are reading the same Vermigli (indeed, the same *locus*), they differ from one another on virtually every crucial point: whether predestination was Vermigli's central dogma, whether he taught double predestination, whether it was supra- or infralapsarian, whether it was *pars providentiae* (part of providence), or whether he considered it rather as an aspect of Christology and Christ's saving function?" James, *Peter Martyr Vermigli and predestination*, 23.

<sup>33</sup> James, *Peter Martyr Vermigli and predestination*, 149.

<sup>34</sup> "If these two intellectual movements [scholasticism and humanism] are pictured as tributaries in the thought of Vermigli, then Augustinianism is the deep and wide river in which they converge. It must not be forgotten that Vermigli, whether Catholic reformist or Protestant theologian, was an Augustinian by vocation." James, *Peter Martyr Vermigli and Predestination*, 23.

<sup>35</sup> James, *Peter Martyr Vermigli and Predestination*, 132 ff.

A second dispute arose when Joseph McLelland in the introduction to his translation of Peter Martyr's philosophical works took exception to the thesis that Vermigli was an inheritor more of the intensified Augustinianism of Rimini than of Thomas Aquinas. In studying the related concept of providence in Vermigli's thought, it seems that Vermigli does not make the distinction between predestination and providence as clearly as James would like. At certain times Vermigli does seem to include predestination under the theme of providence. As such, the sources of Vermigli's thought become much less clear.<sup>36</sup> James seems to be aware of this objection, but his method of giving more weight to the substantial treatments of predestination alone rather than the passing comments on this doctrine imbedded in the comments on providence allows him to continue to see a clear distinction between the two doctrines.<sup>37</sup>

Following on McLelland's exposition, it would seem that James should indeed consider more closely Vermigli's comments on providence. Vermigli defines providence as the mean which God uses to direct things to their proper ends.<sup>38</sup> Such a mean, important for our discussion, is not just the knowledge of such ends, but also the will and power to accomplish them.<sup>39</sup> Indeed, here Vermigli carefully states that God is not simply the author of creation, but the upholder of his created work. Creation necessitates governance. Not only does he direct the chief and principal things, but, indeed, all of his creation.<sup>40</sup> On providence he writes: "neither is their anie thing to be found, that can

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<sup>36</sup> McLelland in *PW*, xxxvii-xxxviii and 196 n. 96 [= *PMR*, 205 note 67]

<sup>37</sup> James, *Peter Martyr Vermigli and Predestination*, 23ff.

<sup>38</sup> *CP*, I.167.

<sup>39</sup> *CP*, I.167; *CP*, I.171.

<sup>40</sup> *LLS*, 315.

escape the same.”<sup>41</sup> Providence belongs properly to the power of God to act and achieve the ends that he has willed. Vermigli clearly does not place himself either with Duns Scotus or Thomas on the question of the priority of knowledge or will in God’s doing, but rather treats the two together.<sup>42</sup> Importantly, Vermigli also speaks of predestination as one of the things that cannot escape his providence.<sup>43</sup> He clearly states that divine providence consists not only of God’s knowledge, but his will and election.<sup>44</sup> From this vantage point, at least, it is interesting to note that Vermigli pushes Thomas away with one thought and embraces him with another.

Important for our discussion is the link of providence and predestination to the outward instruments of God. Two comments are helpful. First, Vermigli consistently wanted his teaching on predestination to be seen in accordance with the other Reformed theologians. Although time and certainly later debates have magnified the differences among the Reformed theologians of the mid-sixteenth century, Vermigli was always careful not to be novel on this doctrine.<sup>45</sup> He repeatedly interacted with and enlisted the support of other Reformed theologians in his writings.<sup>46</sup> As such, his ideas are seen to develop within this group of reformers and not simply out of his own study.<sup>47</sup>

<sup>41</sup> *CP*, I.167.

<sup>42</sup> *CP*, I.171.

<sup>43</sup> *CP*, I.200.

<sup>44</sup> *CP*, I.167.

<sup>45</sup> See Vermigli’s letter to Peter Sturm (13 April 1561) in which he talks appreciatively of Zanchi’s doctrine of predestination in which he heard only the judgement of Scripture which corresponded to the ideas of Augustine, Bucer and Luther. *CP* Appendix, 148.

<sup>46</sup> “I would have you understande that this doeth greatlie greeve me together with other good men, that against the trueth and against your good name they spread verie foule and false reports as touching the eternall election of God, and that heretikes ought not to bee put to death. But it maketh no matter since (as



More importantly, however, it is important to see in Vermigli's predestinarianism the place of the outward element. Called (anachronistically) infralapsarian<sup>48</sup>, Vermigli thereby allows for an important role to be given to the outward instruments of salvation.<sup>49</sup> God's plan is worked out in history through certain means although not primary causes in themselves.<sup>50</sup> These means or instruments (most importantly Christ, Scripture and the Sacraments) are normally used by God to effectuate his promises. Although, therefore, Vermigli is clearly seen as a double predestinarian, it is not the sort of hard, almost deterministic supralapsarianism often shown in caricatures of scholastic theology.<sup>51</sup>

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wee heare) in these things which they write, they dare not confesse their names. I saide (as we heare) because there is not one of those namelesse bookes brought hither to Strasborough. Wee that be here (and especiallie Zancus and I) doe defende your part and the trueth so much as in us lieth." *To Calvin, 9 May, from Strasbourg*; "I read with great pleasure the worke which you set foorth in defence of the wholesome eternall predestination of almightie God... And I also have gathered manie things for the confirmation of this matter, in my Commentarie uppon the Epistle to the Romanes, which certaine monethes past I sent unto Basill to Peter Perne to be imprinted: which Booke neverthelesse could not at this Mart be finished: which nowe I let you understand, to assure you that even for good cause and with all my heart I am glad of your writing." *To Calvin, 21 April, from Zurich*; "I understand it to be a verie profitable and necessarie thing that the doctrine of predestination should be retained pure in the Church, and be truelie and plainlie taught: which because we see it not to be doone as both of us doe with, it greeveth me verie sore. Zanchus and I according to the strength and power given us of God, have not failed of our part, but aswell by teaching as disputing have plainlie and openlie defended the truth." *To Beza. CP, Appendix, 105.*

<sup>47</sup> See James, *Peter Martyr Vermigli and Predestination* for explanation of other Reformers influence on and interaction with Vermigli.

<sup>48</sup> "Vermigli's understanding of predestination is decisively infralapsarian. His predestinarianism is built upon the basic presupposition of the fallenness of humanity." James, *Peter Martyr Vermigli and Predestination*, 57.

<sup>49</sup> The decision to send Christ happens logically after the fall for Vermigli: "But yet he did not this unto Adam; and whereas by his prescience or foreknowledge he knew that he would fall, he might have kept him there-from; but he would not, but would suffer him to fall, and by his eternall decree had Christ to be the remedie of his fall." *CP*, I.187.

<sup>50</sup> *PJ*, 27.

<sup>51</sup> "The doctrine of providence relates to the topic of free will above [ie. in the *PMR*], discussing the twin concepts of divine willing. Some expressions of Reformed theology place such weight on the latter that it steers close to fatalism. Even 'accidental' occasions are within God's governance. What saves the doctrine in Martyr's case is his use of Aristotle's complex causality. God may be 'final' cause, but a network of subordinate causes—formal, material, and efficient—are always in play. This allows divine and human wills to coexist and to 'concur.' The final sentence notes the connection of providence with predestination, a thorny issue in distinguishing types of predestinarian doctrine." McLelland, in *PMR*, 191.

Certainly, Vermigli would argue that the effects of predestination ought not to be tied exclusively to the working of external means or sacraments, but nonetheless the external instrument is used by God in the working out of his decree.<sup>52</sup>

### C. Scripture and the Christological Analogy

Scripture is truly for Martyr the Word of God. The relationship between the incarnate *Logos* and the inspired Word is very close in his theology. It is not simply the relation of witness to the Word of God, but is the direct revelation of God's will.<sup>53</sup>

Vermigli writes: "The word of God we have solely in the Scriptures of God; in them God testifies how much he has loved us, that he has chosen us before the foundations of the world, and that he has given his Son to die on the cross for our sake."<sup>54</sup> Vermigli remarks that this knowledge of God and his merciful will to save through Jesus Christ are known only in Scripture. This deposit of God's will continues to inform Christians: "These teachings have been consigned to the sacred letters and deposited in them for our daily use."<sup>55</sup> Although it is the Spirit that assures the Christian of the will of God and properly applies it, it is nonetheless Scripture that embodies the outward testimony of God's will.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> *LLS*, 132; *DIAL*, 75 and 190.

<sup>53</sup> Here the Neo-Orthodox reading of the theology of the Reformers is not exact. For Martyr Scripture is much more than simply a witness to the Word of God. See also *PMR*, 78; *CP*, I.126; Richard A. Muller, *The Unaccommodated Calvin: Studies in the Foundation of a Theological Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 4ff. David Bagchi's comments on Calvin would also apply to Martyr: "Calvin made God's word practically synonymous with Scripture, and therefore made no qualitative distinctions between its parts: in particular, both Calvin and Bucer gave the Torah a more positive christian role than Luther did." David V.N. Bagchi, "Reformation," in *The Dictionary of Historical Theology*, ed. Trevor A. Hart (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 464.

<sup>54</sup> *LLS*, 254.

<sup>55</sup> *LLS*, 278.

<sup>56</sup> *EW*, 64.

Both Scripture and the sacraments should be understood as the Word of God.

Vermigli makes the link between the two very clear: “The sacrament is of equal value to the Word of God, since it signifies and gives to believers the remission of sins promised by a visible word.”<sup>57</sup> Both must be linked closely to the inward moving of the Spirit of Christ. For example, with regard to the remission of sins, both the ‘audible’ words of Scripture and the ‘visible’ words of the Sacraments point to the identical remission. Certainly, faith is needed in both circumstances, but nonetheless both are tied to one and the same remission of sins: “Every time we hear God’s Word or receive the sacraments with faith, it follows that we receive confirmation regarding the remission of our sins, and experience a wonderful joy within.”<sup>58</sup> Such equality of audible and visible words is not simply a phenomenon of the New Testament, but also of the Old. The sacrifices and ceremonies of the Patriarchs and the Mosaic covenant were also in the same way equivalent to the word of God. Even if the New Testament sacraments are more effective (here Vermigli cites Augustine) they are yet “equal to the Word of God, as things which have nothing more or less, as to the reality they signify, than God’s speaking and his words.”<sup>59</sup> Indeed, Christ, as *Logos*, revealed himself in the Old Testament through the patriarchs and prophets whenever scriptures speak of God speaking.<sup>60</sup>

Importantly, Vermigli posits the presence of the divine in the audible words of God. Such is the reality in the interpretation of Scripture: “God is understood by these

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<sup>57</sup> *EW*, 70.

<sup>58</sup> *EW*, 71.

<sup>59</sup> *LLS*, 78.

<sup>60</sup> *CP*, I.26.

titles of the lips, and while we are speaking with him in the Scriptures, he undoubtedly is graciously present.”<sup>61</sup> The analogy of the *audible* word with Christ the *incarnate* word is clear. It is by the instrument of this word that one can return to and have communion with the Father. Such was Martyr’s teaching on the mystery of redemption:

It is not just from the production and beginnings of the human race that we can learn that we should be eager students of God’s pronouncements; the mystery of our redemption also clearly witnesses to the same fact. The divine and human natures, though they were separated from one another by an infinite distance, were intimately joined together into one and the same person through the Word. Wherefore we too should hope to return to the Father if we shall have embraced the Word with the ardent zeal of faith. How, I ask you, do you think we should regard the sacred books? Clearly they are nothing else than the pedagogues of the elect, given to them by God as most useful. Since they are the instruments of our salvation, we should not examine disdainfully their nature, culture, use, and appearance, seeing that all their dignity and excellence should be measured by the power of God who uses them.<sup>62</sup>

Despite the disdain the world gives to Scripture, it is there that God, thinks Vermigli, holds forth the greatest mysteries of redemption. Key to this passage is the role of the audible words of making the incarnate Word known to humanity. Christ’s presence is known and enjoyed while studying God’s pronouncements in Scripture.

Vermigli links the outward element of Christ’s human nature with the outward element of the written word. Although admitting that the body of Christ is a far more intimate instrument for the working out of sanctification in the believer, Vermigli nonetheless says that the external spoken word has a linked role in this process. The body of Christ is the ultimate instrument in this process, but the outward elements of scripture and sacrament are also instruments.<sup>63</sup> Again, these instruments of Scripture and

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<sup>61</sup> *LLS*, 284.

<sup>62</sup> *LLS*, 288.

<sup>63</sup> *DIAL*, 75.

sacrament do not work on their own, but are effectual when accompanied by the inward work of the Holy Spirit.<sup>64</sup> Both the outward instrument of the Word and the inward working of the Spirit are needed to inflame one's heart to faith. Orothetes chides

Pantachus on this point:

Regardless, you should not pass by with a deaf ear when statements in Scripture attribute a certain efficacy regarding heavenly matters to these instruments. It is asserted that faith comes from hearing, but hearing comes from the word of God. Paul dares to assert that he gave rebirth to the Corinthians through the Gospel. But this happens so that we do not shun the external instruments of God. For they certainly should not be held in low esteem since God has deigned to use them for our salvation.<sup>65</sup>

Vermigli's understanding of the use of instrumental causes is critical for an appreciation of his approach to Scripture.

#### **D. Finitude, the Problem of Sin and Accommodation**

The necessity of Scripture in God's will is also based on the accommodation of God to human capacity to understand. Even in a pristine state before the fall, humanity still needed God to accommodate himself through their language in order to have any understanding of him. It is thus even more so in Scripture that God has thus accommodated himself: "Who is so stupid as not to understand how in the divine letters

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<sup>64</sup> Vermigli is generally with Calvin and Luther on this point. Bray writes: "The church has always believed that Scripture was divinely inspired, but little attempt had been made to clarify what this meant. Some of the church fathers held to a 'dictation' theory of inspiration, according to which the writers of the Bible were passive instruments in the hands of the Holy Spirit; while others believed that the human writers of Scripture played a more active role in its composition. To a large extent, these views were correlated with Christology. Those who stressed the divine activity of the Son of God in human flesh were more inclined to a 'dictation' model of inspiration, whereas those who put their emphasis on the true humanity of Christ preferred the alternative, or 'co-operation', model. At the time of the Reformation, Luther and Calvin were both identified with this alternative, and it is that which characterizes their understanding of biblical inspiration." Gerald Bray, *Biblical Interpretation: Past and Present* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 195.

<sup>65</sup> *DIAL*, 190.

the knowledge of God's infinite wisdom lowers itself from its majesty to the capacity of human beings, as if descending from Olympus to the flatlands of the world."<sup>66</sup> Indeed, Vermigli makes it very clear that God, in himself, is unknowable.<sup>67</sup> A pair of necessary theses from his comments on Exodus chapter three crystallize for us his thinking on the subject:

31.N.4 Although God is not perceived by sense in his own nature, he condescends to human capacity and shows himself to human knowledge by his sensible word, bodily forms, and sacraments.

31.N.5 Although it should be certain to all that God is a Spirit, it is useful to think of him under figures and forms conveyed in Holy Scripture.<sup>68</sup>

Wherever Scripture attributes parts or members to God it does so to help the weak capacity of human beings since it is impossible for us to understand the substance of God. Such attributions to God are very helpful and can, by faith, allow Christians to know God *truly*—even though not through a knowledge of his very substance.<sup>69</sup> Because of this accommodation, *true* knowledge of God was possible in the original state.

The accommodation of God in Scripture is most clearly seen in the passages where God is said to repent. Obviously, for Vermigli God is incorporeal, immutable, and therefore cannot change, yet Scripture claims that such change has occurred. Following Augustine, he states "scripture is accustomed oftentimes to humble itselfe to our capacitie, and to attribute those things unto God, which we see doone in the life and conversation of

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<sup>66</sup> *LLS*, 319.

<sup>67</sup> *CP*, I.125.

<sup>68</sup> *EW*, 128.

<sup>69</sup> *CP*, I.30, 99-101, 129-130.

men; so that the same cannot otherwise be understood.”<sup>70</sup> This accommodation is attributed because God has not fully revealed his will. He has made his *revealed* will known, but yet guards his *secret* will. His revealed will seems to change, but his secret will remains steadfast and immutable.<sup>71</sup>

What really blinds humanity, however, is the presence of sin. Vermigli makes special note that he is not following Plato at this point. Vermigli understands Plato to posit the human soul to be shut up in the body as if it were in a dark and blind prison and therefore unable to have sight of God.<sup>72</sup> Vermigli, however, argues that it is not the body that blinds us, but rather our sin. Indeed, because of sin humanity has come into darkness, blindness and ignorance of heavenly things. Vermigli writes: “For this cause are we transformed into moles, bats, and owles. Otherwise God, of his owne nature is most cleere, yea & the verie light it selfe, unless the fowlenes of our sinne be set betweene us.”<sup>73</sup> This foulness has made what was originally possible to be now impossible.<sup>74</sup>

Key to God’s implementation of the plan of salvation was his revealing himself to his people. In the Old Testament God spoke through his prophets and could be consulted through the Urim and Thummim,<sup>75</sup> yet New Testament believers are no worse off. It was

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<sup>70</sup> CP, I.207. The kenotic language used here by Vermigli is interesting for it parallels his understanding of Christology as seen in chapter 3 above. As Christ emptied himself in the incarnation for the benefit of his creatures, so Scripture empties itself in its written form for the benefit of its readers. See Philippians 2 for the Pauline understanding of kenosis.

<sup>71</sup> CP, I.208.

<sup>72</sup> CP, I.31.

<sup>73</sup> CP, I.32. See Calvin’s similar comments in his *Institutes*, Bk. I.

<sup>74</sup> “The strength of nature is corrupt, feeble, and defiled through sinne: and therefore the truth, which it taketh hold of, it hath not effectually.” CP, I.116

<sup>75</sup> LLS, 292.

not simply possible to rely on the engraving by the Spirit of everything necessary for salvation on our hearts because sin broke off contact with God.<sup>76</sup> It was therefore necessary in the Old Testament as in the New for God to communicate by the Spirit with external writings and the support of books as “a substitute gift for that familiarity” and this “especially since we go astray so easily both in the actions of our life and in dogma.”<sup>77</sup> In the sinful human condition there is then nothing more disheartening than the ignorance of Scriptures and nothing more blessed than knowing them.<sup>78</sup>

In one sense, it will only be in the eschaton that we will regain a true knowledge of God without the accommodating instrument of the Scriptures—this true knowledge of God is the goal of the salvation: “Although all men of reason and piety supremely desire it, no one fully attains it before that time. At present, through some signs in creation, through the witness of the sacred writings, and through the internal revelation of the Spirit, we may have some knowledge of our blessed Father. But then we shall know him completely.”<sup>79</sup> In that day the sweet communion of knowledge that was broken by sin will be restored and leading to that time God has given the gift of his Word. It is yet possible, however, to have a foretaste of that full communion in this life:

In this life, when we read the Scriptures with enthusiasm of spirit and offer earnest prayers to God, even when we complain of our distresses and weep with deep feeling on account of our ills, or we hear a lively proclamation of his Word, do we not experience a pleasure, a delight, a consolation that goes beyond

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<sup>76</sup> See also Vermigli’s comments on the sinful state in the first two chapters of his commentary on Romans: *ROM*.

<sup>77</sup> *LLS*, 292.

<sup>78</sup> *LLS*, 316; *LAM*, 50.

<sup>79</sup> *EW*, 77.



sweetness, diversions, or enjoyments this world gives? Yet this is but the beginning of eternal life.<sup>80</sup>

The written word is given as a consolation or medicine which is effective in restoring the mind to be capable of understanding God's revelation.<sup>81</sup>

### **E. God's Singular Will and the Diverse Wills of Humans**

The importance of the revelation of God's will in Scripture is made plain by using the example of the worship of God. For Vermigli this was made clear in the Old Testament. Commenting on Lamentations chapter two, he writes: "Even though God's power occupies everything, there are nevertheless places on earth where he seems to have planted his feet very firmly, that is where his worship principally thrives."<sup>82</sup> God chose the Temple to display his presence and the people of Israel often despised it. Thus God was not worshipped and he burned "with a fierce anger."<sup>83</sup> For Vermigli, this Old Testament example translates directly into the New Testament: "So let us not cast away our readings, meeting together, sacraments, and gospel, but let us value faith and approve the good life."<sup>84</sup> Indeed, it is not for humans to choose a way to glorify God according to their ceremonies and inventions, but that which conforms to God's will.<sup>85</sup>

The chief problem of the unreformed Roman teaching according to Martyr is that it has elevated the Church's fragmented and human will above that of God's singular and

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<sup>80</sup> *EW*, 78.

<sup>81</sup> *LJS*, 317; *CP*, I.116.

<sup>82</sup> *LAM*, 71.

<sup>83</sup> *LAM*, 71.

<sup>84</sup> *LAM*, 71.

abiding will. The Church thus brought the sixteenth-century schism on itself: “Had it been content to follow the religion and worship taught us in the Scriptures, these many divisions would not have happened.”<sup>86</sup> Yet, despite this imposition of human will upon the Church, there is still a truly catholic Church which does not forsake the truth revealed by Christ in Sacred Scriptures and considers “acceptable and pleasing to God only that worship which he has expressly required.”<sup>87</sup> The most striking characteristic of pagan religion, muses Martyr, is the presence of many different oracles—much like the many different human opinions prevalent in the Roman church of his day. Thankfully, “God’s mercy and goodness, however, have put before us the one oracle of the divine letters in place of all these.”<sup>88</sup> The only source of information about God’s will for worship is Scripture: “Therefore, he commands that we seek our building from the holy Scriptures, which hold religious wisdom, like the fable told by poets about how Minerva sprang out of the head of Jupiter. For we have received from above that which is necessary for religion; therefore, we must not concoct ourselves a religion after our own imagination.”<sup>89</sup> This outward testimony of God’s will is assured in us by the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit.<sup>90</sup>

### III. Scripture as Instrument

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<sup>85</sup> *EW*, 50; *CP*, IV.17.

<sup>86</sup> *EW*, 62; See *CP*, IV.18.

<sup>87</sup> *EW*, 62.

<sup>88</sup> *LLS*, 290.

<sup>89</sup> *LLS*, 266.

<sup>90</sup> *EW*, 64.

### A. Causality—Efficient and Instrumental

Key to Vermigli's guarding the outward instrument of Scripture is his use of instrumental causes. As has been noted by scholars on many occasions, Vermigli is a proficient employer of the Aristotelian four-fold causal schema.<sup>91</sup> These causes (formal, material, efficient and final) are often used by Vermigli to formulate a detailed definition. It is often this use of the four-fold causal schema which is cited as one of Vermigli's most overt uses of Aristotle and therefore as evidence of his scholastic bent.<sup>92</sup> But, as we shall see, despite having roots in Aristotle,<sup>93</sup> Vermigli's use of the concept of causality and instrumentality certainly needs to be qualified. Most importantly there are the additional comments by Augustine on instrumentality which shed light on Vermigli's scriptural hermeneutic.<sup>94</sup> Vermigli's use of four-fold causality, however, is helpful for him with the "thorny problem of *concursum*, the joint activity of divine and human wills."<sup>95</sup> For our present purposes, however, we will not consider all instances of causal relations but simply the relation between primary and instrumental causes.

Vermigli holds to instrumental causes, but always in relation to God as the efficient cause: "...second causes, although they have some force in themselves, ...bring

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<sup>91</sup> See Donnelly, *Calvinism and Scholasticism*, 61.

<sup>92</sup> I.e.: *PJ*, 26-27; *PMR*, 195 and 223; *PW*, 7.

<sup>93</sup> In the notes of the Peter Martyr Library volumes there are several references to Aristotle's use of four-fold causality. Not all the references are to the most helpful sections in Aristotle's works. The most direct references are: Aristotle, *Analytica posteriora* II.11.94a20ff.; *Physica* II.3.194b16ff.; *Metaphysica* V.2.1013a24-1013b28.

<sup>94</sup> Augustine, *On Christian Teaching* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997).

<sup>95</sup> McLelland, in *PMR*, 186 n. 10.

nothing to passe without the providence of God.”<sup>96</sup> The Holy Spirit uses the outward instrument of Scripture to effect salvation.<sup>97</sup> Vermigli is very clear about the rightful place of secondary causes: “We take not awaie the second causes; but we make them instruments of the providence of God...But although God send his angels, yet he him selfe is present and principall over all things.”<sup>98</sup> No instrumental cause happens simply in its being performed, but always because of the divine efficient causality.

Anything can be used by God as an instrument of his providence. Vermigli talks about many different kinds of instruments and means God uses to bring about his work. Most often these means are good, but even the Devil, evil humans, and sin itself are used as other sorts of instruments in his hands. Vermigli cautions: “We must consider that while men and the devil may be agents and instruments of adversities, they are sent from God as principal cause; hence we must fly to him by prayer.”<sup>99</sup> It is not often clear why or how God uses tyrants or wicked men in his providence, especially when they are seen to live in wealth and prosperity, but God nonetheless is to be honoured as their author and will use them for his glory.<sup>100</sup> Although in the case of sin God is not properly the author (properly, rather, humans are),<sup>101</sup> he nonetheless permits sin for the working out of his

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<sup>96</sup> CP, I.170; John Patrick Donnelly: “...it can hardly be denied that God concurs in the production of every physical action. For he is the prime mover in the production of all things and the author without whose divine power nothing can exist...Whatever happens is produced not only by inferior and secondary causes, but also flows from God the first efficient cause.” Donnelly, *Calvinism and Scholasticism*, 70.

<sup>97</sup> DIAL, 190.

<sup>98</sup> CP, I.173.

<sup>99</sup> EW, 131.

<sup>100</sup> CP, I.172 and 175. Of this theme in Vermigli Donnelly writes: “Men cannot see the *ratio* of secondary causes in events that seem fortuitous, but God sees and directs them.” *Calvinism and Scholasticism*, 69.

<sup>101</sup> CP, I.184.

plan. God willed the fall, but this by permission and not by activity in order to proclaim his goodness and righteousness and to bring about the salvation of his people.<sup>102</sup>

God normally acts in each instrument according to its own proper nature.<sup>103</sup>

Vermigli states that there were two kinds of instruments in Scripture: active and passive instruments. An active instrument, though not the chief efficient cause, nonetheless is “a great means and furtherance to bring the thing to effect.”<sup>104</sup> Examples of this type of active instrument would be iron tools to cut hard things and medicines to heal diseases even though these are tools of the craftsman or doctor. On the other hand, there are passive instruments which have no strength to bring an action to effect. These, like the rod Moses used to divide the sea, are passive instruments which do nothing to help; in these the miraculous power and might of God are displayed. These latter instruments are not used against their nature, but rather with a different purpose through the extraordinary working of God.<sup>105</sup>

Although Vermigli wavers sometimes in characterizing Scripture as an active or passive instrument, it is nonetheless clearly a primary instrument in the hands of God. On a number of occasions Vermigli states that Scripture is “the instrument that God uses for our salvation.”<sup>106</sup> At times he writes of Scripture as barbarous<sup>107</sup> (and therefore a passive or miraculous instrument), and at others he writes of Scripture as ornate poetry

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<sup>102</sup> CP, I.186 and 191.

<sup>103</sup> CP, I.174; See Donnelly, *Calvinism and Scholasticism*, 70.

<sup>104</sup> CP, I.65

<sup>105</sup> CP, I.65.

<sup>106</sup> PMR, 79 and LLS, 288.

<sup>107</sup> LLS, 288.

and prose<sup>108</sup> (and therefore an active or persuasive instrument), but throughout its instrumental nature is held forth. Whether barbarous or ornate, Vermigli certainly holds Scripture to be an instrument God uses in working out his plan of salvation. With the apostle Paul he writes that the Gospel revealed in Scripture “is the power of God for salvation of everyone who believes.”<sup>109</sup> To change the evil will of humans, God uses Scripture as a means.<sup>110</sup>

### **B. Inward and Outward – *res* and sign**

It is simply not enough to attribute Vermigli’s understanding of instrumentality to his appropriation of Aristotle’s doctrine of causes. It was, in fact, Augustine who was without question the Church Father who exerted the most influence on the embrace of this concept in the theology of the 16<sup>th</sup> century Reformers. By appeals to Augustine’s writings many of the leading Reformers hoped to gain credence for their theological programs. One of the many who thoroughly studied and often borrowed from Augustine was Peter Martyr. In Vermigli’s library was the *Omnia opera* of Augustine published in ten volumes at Basel in 1543. Donnelly notes that “Augustine is easily Martyr’s favourite author. References to Augustine outnumber those to any other nonscriptural source several times over.”<sup>111</sup> Before his flight from Italy in 1542, Vermigli must already have read and digested much of Augustine’s thought which would become so important in his later career. Even though Aquinas and Gregory of Rimini would be particularly

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<sup>108</sup> *LAM*, 4.

<sup>109</sup> *PMR*, 79.

<sup>110</sup> *CP*, I.176.

<sup>111</sup> Donnelly, *Calvinism and Scholasticism*, 34.

stimulating in his education, Augustine was unquestionably the staple of his theological diet.<sup>112</sup>

One crucial distinction in Augustine would become an important underlying theme in the hermeneutic of Vermigli. Augustine's distinction between 'use' (*usus*) and 'enjoyment' (*fruitio*) is especially useful for Vermigli to temper his concept of instrumentality. Vermigli is careful to make a clear distinction between the instrument as means and the Divine end. Yet he is very careful to show how the Spirit of God employs the instrument in order to bring the user closer to the Divine. Further, it is particularly interesting to note the power with which a properly used instrument is endowed.

Before addressing Vermigli directly on this point, the *usus-fruitio* distinction as formulated by Augustine must be understood. The distinction is best illustrated in the first book of Augustine's hermeneutical treatise *De Doctrina Christiana*.<sup>113</sup> In this work, Augustine argues that all things can be distinguished into two categories: those to be *used* and those to be *enjoyed*.<sup>114</sup> In practice the distinction means "those...to be enjoyed make us happy; those...to be used assist us and give us a boost, so to speak, as we press on towards our happiness, so that we may reach and hold fast to the things which make us

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<sup>112</sup> Donnelly, *Calvinism and Scholasticism*, 36.

<sup>113</sup> Vermigli's knowledge of this book and its contents are clear. Besides general indirect borrowing of ideas, Vermigli cited directly and extensively from this little book. For example: *PMR*, 74; *ROM*, 3v; *JUD*, 4v and 57v; *DIAL*, 63. Even Anthony Marten, the translator of the *Loci Communes* into English recognized this aspect of Vermigli's thought in his introduction to the *Common Places*. Vermigli was not alone in his use of this small text: Bray emphasizes the importance of this Augustine's work in the medieval period: "The Middle Ages were also characterized by the generally felt need to appeal to ancient authority. Augustine of Hippo was the standard source for almost everything, and his methods of biblical interpretation, as outlined in the *De Doctrina Christiana* (On Christian Doctrine), became universal." Gerald Bray, *Biblical Interpretation*, 130.

<sup>114</sup> Augustine, *On Christian Teaching* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 9. Vermigli acknowledges and explicitly uses this distinction: *CP*, II.574.

happy.”<sup>115</sup> There is however a danger associated with things which are properly to be used. If not used correctly they are ‘abused’ and lead to disaster: “And we, placed as we are among things of both kinds, both enjoy and use them; but if we choose to enjoy things that are to be used, our advance is impeded and sometimes even diverted, and we are held back, or even put off, from attaining things which are to be enjoyed, because we are hamstrung by our love of lower things.”<sup>116</sup> The distinction for Augustine is critical: to enjoy something is to hold it for its own sake, and to use something is to apply it however it is supposed to be applied in order to bring us to what we want to enjoy.<sup>117</sup> Moreover, we do not have the power of ourselves to select what is to be used and what to be enjoyed; in the final analysis the things of this temporal, corruptible order are to be used and God alone, eternal and incorruptible, is to be enjoyed.<sup>118</sup> Yet, crucial for Augustine’s argument is the idea that using the temporal order to bring us to God, the object to be enjoyed, does not mean that the thing used has no value. To the contrary, Augustine claims that “to enlighten us and enable us, the whole temporal dispensation was set up by divine providence for our salvation.”<sup>119</sup> Even though we must not enjoy this dispensation with a permanent love, there is a sort of transient love for our means of transport to God.<sup>120</sup>

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<sup>115</sup> Augustine, *On Christian Teaching*, 9.

<sup>116</sup> Augustine, *On Christian Teaching*, 9.

<sup>117</sup> Augustine, *On Christian Teaching*, 9.

<sup>118</sup> Augustine, *On Christian Teaching*, 10.

<sup>119</sup> Augustine, *On Christian Teaching*, 27.

<sup>120</sup> Augustine, *On Christian Teaching*, 27.



W.A. Hannam helps us to understand the Augustinian concept of instrumentality with clarity. Hannam writes that to *use* something is not a purely self-interested seeking after happiness.<sup>121</sup> Rather, it is to use the instrument for what it truly is, namely a *means* to an end. Certain material things might have special mediating powers when used according to God's ordinance. Hannam explains that use and enjoyment are two modes of relation: the first mode is a mediated relation and the second is immediate.<sup>122</sup> According to Hannam, Augustine never says that the first type of relationship is unnecessary. This is important for it implies that Augustine does not advocate a using followed by a discarding of the creation or the material.<sup>123</sup> Rather, as long as we participate in this created order these things should continue to be loved, not on their own account, but on account of the one to whom they lead. Augustine does say that this created order will come to an end, but for the moment God has chosen to work through these weak instruments.<sup>124</sup>

This distinction of instrument and end is important for the distinction of the outward written or spoken Word of God and the inward working of the Spirit. The outward written or spoken Word is used by the Spirit to bring the hearer to the enjoyment of God. As such, they are not superfluous, but are to be appreciated and loved for the mediation that they operate. True reading or preaching of the Scriptures cannot happen simply in a vacuum, but must always happen in the context of the Spirit. For the Spirit to

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<sup>121</sup> W. A. Hannam, "*Ad illud ubi permendendum est: The Metaphysics of St. Augustine's usus-fruitio Distinction in relation to Love of Neighbour, De doctrina Christiana, I,*" *Studia Patristica* 38 (2001): 169.

<sup>122</sup> Hannam, "*usus-fruitio Distinction,*" 173.

<sup>123</sup> Hannam, "*usus-fruitio Distinction,*" 171.

<sup>124</sup> For more on the usefulness of Augustine's distinction with the help of Hannam's analysis see ch. 5.

be present one must have faith. Indeed, faith does not take away the power of the instruments—it rather brings the only real power that the audible and visible words of God have.<sup>125</sup> Such power is certainly not present *ex opere operato*.<sup>126</sup> This form of instrumentality is clearly seen in Vermigli's comments on the preached Word and the sacraments in his early exposition on the Creed:

As the Church through its ministers preaches the divine Word, and in its sermons offers reconciliation through Christ, the offer of the remission of sins is extended from without through the words of Scripture. Thus do the grace and Spirit of Christ enter the soul through the channel of attentive ears. Beyond all doubt, then, the preaching of the Word of God is the beginning of forgiveness. Because it is set forth in the Church, here also we are loosed from our guilt.<sup>127</sup>

Vermigli himself makes the analogous link in comments on the sacraments immediately following this on the preached word:

The sacraments, moreover, are visible words of this absolution. As the Word is spoken and heard, so the sacrament admonishes and speaks in a way visible and evident. If we exercise faith, we are capable of receiving, and we actually obtain, all that God's promises and the sacrament signify. We can respond with faith to the reality represented only because of the inward movement of the Spirit of Christ, as already noted. We should not suppose, however, that our sins are taken away simply on account of our receiving the sacrament. This we obtain by faith, believing all that it visibly declares by the command of Christ. The sacrament is of equal value to the Word of God, since it signifies and gives to believers the remission of sins promised by a visible word.<sup>128</sup>

Here we must consider the close instrumental relationship of outward element and the power of the Spirit. Certainly this instrumental relationship happens within the will of God to use the instruments, but with faith they do have a certain power. This power should be understood correctly as a *signifying* power.

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<sup>125</sup> *EW*, 69.

<sup>126</sup> *PMR*, 78.

<sup>127</sup> *EW*, 70.

<sup>128</sup> *EW*, 70.

Considering the instrumentality of the audible and visible words in Vermigli as *signifying* power links us directly to Augustine's *De Doctrina Christiana*. Augustine's main concern in this little work was to distinguish properly between signs and the things themselves. His point, an hermeneutical one, was that a real understanding of a text had to take into account both signs and things: one cannot simply rest with the signs or presume to know the things themselves without properly considering the signs.<sup>129</sup> Signs can be misinterpreted, so for the rest of his work Augustine gives guidelines for the interpretation of signs so as to lead properly to the things which they signify.<sup>130</sup> Such guidelines are closely held to by Vermigli in his consideration of the use and abuse of Scripture.<sup>131</sup> Signs are not things, hence should not be abused as if they were (e.g. Vermigli's would have in mind the ritual abuse of the host as if it were Jesus himself<sup>132</sup>), but they nonetheless have the power to move the mind to the thing itself.<sup>133</sup> Such signifying power is not to be denigrated for it is the method that God has chosen to move

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<sup>129</sup> For example: Augustine, *On Christian Teaching*, 72.

<sup>130</sup> Augustine, *On Christian Teaching*, Bks. II, III, and IV.

<sup>131</sup> "We do not pay attention when at times the things being signified are attributed to the signs, or the reverse, when the properties of the signs are ascribed to the things being signified. Anybody wanting to understand these matters in more detail should look into the useful books *On Christian Doctrine* which Augustine wrote." *PW*, 67.

<sup>132</sup> This thought is clear in Vermigli's letter to the Polish Lords: "Care must be taken that this be done regarding the sacraments and especially the Eucharist as sincerely as possible. There, believe me, lie the plague-bearing seeds of idolatry; unless they are removed, the Church of Christ will never again be distinguished by pure and sincere worship. Do not let the sacraments be despised as meaningless and empty signs, but again do not let men attribute to them more than their institution will allow. The person who does not distinguish the sacraments from the real things—aside from being deceived—clings shamefully to the elements of the world, not without his own destruction, and misuses the divine institutions in a carnal way. The whole dignity of the sacramental elements is measured by the fact that the Holy Spirit has chosen them for himself as the instruments by which he promotes our salvation. For this reason they therefore differ greatly from signs invented by human thinking." *LLS*, 146

<sup>133</sup> *EW*, 71.

our minds in this created and sinful world. By faith and with the Spirit these signs can be again properly understood and appreciated for their signifying power. The right ordering of outward sign and inward spiritual reality is key in the theology of Vermigli. The outward is not superfluous, but is a necessary signifying instrument (because God has graciously willed it to be so) which, by faith, brings the believer to the inward spiritual reality.<sup>134</sup>

### C. The Power of Scripture

Scripture, like the Eucharist, is not *simply* or *merely* a sign, but an effective and powerful sign. Often in the polemic against a Reformed understanding of the outward instruments it was said that this understanding takes all the power away from the sacrament. Vermigli, following the thought of Augustine, holds that the audible and visible Words are signs that point to the inward spiritual reality, but they are certainly not signs without power. Vermigli consistently speaks of the great power of the outward sign throughout his works. Scripture's power in the work of salvation is not minimized by Martyr:

When it came to breaking our hearts, which were hard and obstinate, not just ordinary equipment but even the most powerful battering rams were needed. For this reason God revealed to his Church and before everybody not a weak and dull message but an ample and manifold one. For he exhorts, terrorizes, attacks, calls back, teaches, refutes, promises, threatens, sings, beseeches, prays, begs, praises, criticizes, recounts past deeds, shows current happenings, and predicts future events, so that he might bend the stony hearts of the ungodly even as the softest wax is bent into all shapes. Hence it is also called the conqueror of all.<sup>135</sup>

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<sup>134</sup> See *EW*, 57 and 63; *LLS*, 254.

<sup>135</sup> *LLS*, 291.

Such language, obviously, does not speak of a *mere* instrument, but of one which is effectual in the realisation of the end proposed. Indeed, Vermigli often makes a distinction between pagan revelation which can at most do little tricks and the revelation in Scripture which performs true miracles.<sup>136</sup> Using metaphors of war, Vermigli notes that our real and powerful arsenal is that of Scripture and not our own opinion.<sup>137</sup>

#### IV. Description of Scripture

##### A. Definition – Spirit and Vessels

In order not to abuse Scripture, Vermigli thinks it important to note what Scripture actually is. Although admittedly not a very imaginative definition, Vermigli considers Scripture “a certain expression of the wisdom of God, inspired by the Holy Spirit into godly men, and then recorded in monuments and writings.”<sup>138</sup> This definition clearly points to the two parts of Scripture: the divine inspiration and the actual writing. The making of Scripture is a mirror of the subsequent power of Scripture on the Christian. God, by the Spirit, inspired the writing of the outward written Scripture which is in turn used by the Spirit to bring the Christian back to God.

In the time of both the Old and New Testaments it was the Spirit of God who inspired the writing of Scripture. Vermigli agrees with the apostle Peter that prophecy did not come from the human will, but only by the motion of the Holy Spirit.<sup>139</sup> In the

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<sup>136</sup> *LLS*, 290ff.; *PMR*, 70.

<sup>137</sup> *LLS* 278 and 298.

<sup>138</sup> “Expressio quaedam sapientiae Dei, afflata sancto Spiritu piis hominibus: deinde monumentis literisque consignata.” *LC*, I.24. See *Shute*, “Introduction,” in *LAM*.

<sup>139</sup> *LC*, I.24; *CP*, I.126.

preface to his *Commentary on Romans*, Vermigli makes the authorship of the Holy Spirit explicit.<sup>140</sup> Not only does the Spirit inspire the books of Scripture, but he is also the main guarantor of its authority. It is the same Spirit that bestowed the revelation upon the prophets and apostles who “doth make us assuredly to beleve that they are not the inventions of men.”<sup>141</sup> Neither the holy life of these vessels nor any sort of miracles, but only the Spirit of God who can persuade and testify to the heart of the truth of the revelation.<sup>142</sup> Inspiration for such revelation can not simply come by a motion of the mind, but necessarily from the Spirit of God.<sup>143</sup>

Although the Spirit is the primary author of Scripture, he nonetheless used human vessels to write what was revealed. Again the preface to the *Romans* commentary makes this explicit:

But bycause that the holy ghost is the author of this epistle to the Romanes, and Paul is only the writer thereof, therefore I will the more sparingly touch his prayes. The Lord called him a vessell, which in the Hebrew phrase is an organ or instrument, elected whereby his name should be spred abroad throughout the whole world. And the name of the Lord we know is Jesus Christ.<sup>144</sup>

Such preaching as an instrument of the Spirit is most explicitly seen when the prophecy is written long after the historical or actual revelation of God. Even if the prophet was not yet alive during the time of the event, his writing of the event is still authoritative because of the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.<sup>145</sup>

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<sup>140</sup> *ROM*, 1r.

<sup>141</sup> *JUD*, 5r.

<sup>142</sup> *JUD*, 5r

<sup>143</sup> *CP*, I.103; See *CP*, I.106.

<sup>144</sup> *ROM*, 1r.

<sup>145</sup> *JUD*, 5r.

## B. A Curious Question – Is Scripture Ornate or Barbarous?

Perplexing, however, is that Vermigli is not consistent in speaking of relationships of the Spirit and the human vessel to the style of Scripture. Often he speaks of Scripture as being far greater than what human capacity could achieve. Conversely, he can speak also of the rudeness or coarseness of Scripture. At certain times Vermigli can be found saying about the writers of Scripture that “God’s grace made them so brilliant that not only by life but also by style they exceeded human limits...”<sup>146</sup> At other times he writes that even the Apostle Paul might “stagger in speaking”<sup>147</sup> or even have “faults in writing and speaking.”<sup>148</sup> At certain points he notes that Scripture is a masterpiece of literature:

None of the orators of this world have ever had so many ornaments, analogies, tropes, colorations, and forms and ways of speaking as the Holy Spirit has employed in presenting one and the same thing in infinite ways. No human faculty has such an abundance and variety of material as God’s sermons have; in them nobody ever is sufficiently learned, and nobody sees everything.<sup>149</sup>

Yet, at other points he is forced to make an apology for the rudeness of Scripture:

Touchyng the Cilicians [i.e. the Apostle Paul’s] tounge, which is sometimes objected agaynst the Apostle, thus we may answere. That the holy ghost decreed to write those thinges both for the learned and unlearned. Wherefore it was requisite to use the common and vulgare speech. For it oftentimes happeneth, that the unlearned are through too much exquisitnes and fines of speech so

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<sup>146</sup> *GEN*, 1r “nam Dei gratia ita illustres illos reddidit, ut non solum vita, sed stylo quoque humanos limites excesserint...”

<sup>147</sup> *ROM*, 4r.

<sup>148</sup> *ROM*, 4v.

<sup>149</sup> *LLS*, 279; See Vermigli on poetry in his commentary on Lamentations: “The power of the Holy Spirit so stoops down and is so devoted to helping us that the Spirit’s power uses any sort of human instrument (provided, of course, the instrument is honorable) to soften hard hearts. Just as the Holy Spirit does not disdain metaphors, nonliteral expressions, comparisons, similes, and figures of speech, so also the Spirit employs various kinds of poetry to soothe his human subject’s fierce temperaments.” *LAM*, 4.

hindred, that they are not able to understand the sense or meaning. For remedy agaynst the same, it behoveth that there should be used a playne and accustomed kynd of speech.<sup>150</sup>

Vermigli perhaps recognized this ambiguity on his part and tried to remedy it by speaking of the accommodation of God in Scripture and the importance of the message of Scripture over the style of Scripture. In the first place, the mysteries of the person and work of God are too great for any kind of human language. Even the most exalted could not describe the majesty of God. Hence, God has accommodated himself in his revelation so as to be able to be described in fitting human language.<sup>151</sup> Such language might *seem* barbarous, but actually *all* language can only crudely represent God. The revelation in Scripture is but a beginning of what the Holy Spirit has locked up until the consummation of the world.<sup>152</sup> More important than the beauty of the style of Scripture is the beauty of its message. Indeed, although the style of Scripture might not seem to reach the literary heights of the classical poets, its message is far and away superior. Vermigli states that at first Scripture seems barbarous, but one “should ponder within how they are instruments of the Holy Spirit and not look in them for rhetorical charm but rather admire the power of the cross, which Christ does not allow to fail because of human eloquence.”<sup>153</sup> It would seem, therefore, that the style of Scripture is quite a secondary question for Vermigli—it is the message that counts. It is not the style that nourishes the soul, but the substance.<sup>154</sup> In fact, Vermigli writes that the sometimes

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<sup>150</sup> ROM, 4v.

<sup>151</sup> GEN, 1r; ROM, 4r; LAM, 4.

<sup>152</sup> LLS, 279.

<sup>153</sup> LLS, 289.

<sup>154</sup> PMR, 72; LLS, 288; ROM, 4v.



apparent rudeness of Scripture points to its actual value: "So in this Apostle the spirite of the Lorde sometimes stirred up the force of wryting and of speaking: in whom these things which seme to be faults in wryting and in speaking, were most singular vertues."<sup>155</sup>

### C. The Divisions of Scripture and Its Goal

A correct use of the instrument of Scripture necessitates knowing of the divisions and the goal of Scripture. Scripture is divided into Old and New Testaments and Law and Gospel. These two divisions however are subsumed under the overall goal of Scripture which is to preach Christ. The Old and New Testaments do not differ themselves in substance, "but only in ceremonies, in political institutions, in various conditions, and different circumstances."<sup>156</sup> In both testaments the same salvation through faith in the Messiah is promised.<sup>157</sup> Indeed, the divine covenant in both is the same: "from both sides, a Savior is needed who must be gained by the same means, and there is the same people, the same trunk, and the same root: it follows necessarily that our covenant is the same as their covenant, to which purpose God promised that he would be our God and asks us that we be his people."<sup>158</sup> The only difference is that the Messiah is

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<sup>155</sup> *ROM*, 4v; See *LLS*, 279: "The Holy Spirit has kept for himself many things still locked up there so that he might keep us as his students right up to the consummation of the world. He repeatedly shows us some things to lure us on, and he gives us some things so that he may work on the minds of readers. There is not on earth such a variety of grasses, flowers, plants, and fruits as the abundance of divine meanings in the sacred letters. Ah, if only we were convinced that those divine sermons were gold, silver, emeralds, sapphires, precious gems, and the sweetest honey, no one would ever let himself be torn from them. But David, who constantly devoted himself to divine Scripture, sings how it is more precious than gold or topaz, far more desirable than precious stones, and sweeter than honey and its honeycomb. All who wish to follow him whether he is coming in or going out will find very happy pastures."

<sup>156</sup> *PMR*, 77.

<sup>157</sup> *CP*, II.586; *PJ*, 113 and 172.

<sup>158</sup> *PMR*, 77.

now known fully and the Spirit of God works more clearly.<sup>159</sup> The Old Testament has surely been abrogated in part, yet much, including its substance, still remains.<sup>160</sup> Vermigli makes a very interesting statement which speaks to this unity of the Word of God:

So our sacraments, in common with the ancients, are such that they would never be profitable without Christ and faith, things added by true faith which grasps Christ. We will certainly not deny that the Patriarchs and the faithful of the Old Testament have rejoiced in righteousness while pursuing those sacraments which they had at the time. Even if we grant that ours are more effective than those and as Augustine says, are more venerable and certainly more suitable. For they are equal to the Word of God, as things which have nothing more or less, as to the reality they signify, than God's speaking and his words.<sup>161</sup>

Such statement makes Vermigli's link of the Two Testaments with the Word of God remarkably clear. Moreover the Sacraments and the Written Word of God in the New Testament have the exact same signifying power as God's direct speech in the Old—they both point to salvation only through Jesus Christ.<sup>162</sup>

A second distinction of Law and Gospel also points to the same goal of Christ. Law is "teaching handed down by God's authority concerning things to be required and to be avoided."<sup>163</sup> Gospel is "the power of God for salvation to everyone who

<sup>159</sup> *PMR*, 77; *CP*, II.584. Vermigli uses the analogy of a pile of money before persons of differing sized hands. The pile of money is exactly the same for all (i.e. the divine truths are always the same), but certain people have bigger hands and therefore can grasp larger amounts of money (i.e. the New Testament Christians who know more of Christ). *CP*, II.588.

<sup>160</sup> *PMR*, 78.

<sup>161</sup> *PMR*, 78. See also *CP*, II.588.

<sup>162</sup> *CP*, II.583; *CP*, I.101; *JUD*, Bii r; *PMR*, 69; Frank James writes: "Vermigli's goal as a biblical commentator was not completely satisfied by achieving clarity and explicating the plain meaning of the text. Both are linked to the christological focus." James, "Vermigli, Peter Martyr," 241; also see McLelland *Visible Words of God*, 91.

<sup>163</sup> *PMR*, 79.

believes.”<sup>164</sup> Care must be taken however not simply to equate this division of Law and Gospel with the division of the Old and New Testaments. As Vermigli unifies the two Testaments under the goal of preaching the Messiah, so he sees that both law and gospel are in both Testaments.<sup>165</sup> Importantly, Vermigli clearly points to multiple uses of this law:

Its work is varied: through God’s will to expose, reveal and reproach for transgressions; to appease the anger of God; to inflict penalties and damnation, and also for these reasons to drive the elect of God to Christ, who brings back to himself those who have been initiated in the faith when they assented to him, by the regeneration granted for accomplishing the will of God, just as is offered in giving the law to us. For he bestows the Spirit freely, and by regeneration causes the will which rejects the precepts of God to become willing.<sup>166</sup>

There are the negative functions of revealing sin and showing damnation, but also the positive functions of driving the elect to Christ and showing the will of God for the Christian life.<sup>167</sup> These functions, hence, do not simply precede the Gospel but also follow it.<sup>168</sup> Indeed, the law is now written on the hearts of believers so as to allow the free following of God’s commandments.<sup>169</sup>

## V. Of Bees and Spiders: Tradition and the Authority of Scripture

The instrumental or signifying power of Scripture is seen also in its authority—especially when this authority is contrasted to the presumed authority of the Tradition of

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<sup>164</sup> *PMR*, 79.

<sup>165</sup> *PMR*, 79; *GEN*, 1v; *JUD*, 2v; *CP*, II.583.

<sup>166</sup> *PMR*, 79.

<sup>167</sup> *GEN*, 1v; *PJ*, 128.

<sup>168</sup> As such Vermigli was explicitly in the Reformed camp on the uses of the law.

<sup>169</sup> *CP*, II.584; *CP*, I.117

the Roman Church. Vermigli was intimately aware of the Catholic position of the equality of Scripture and Tradition which was to be taken at the Council of Trent shortly before his death.<sup>170</sup> Indeed, much of his reflexion on this topic was not simply to celebrate the authority of Scripture, but to guard against Scripture's abuse by Tridentine interpreters. Writing to his disciple and sometime amanuensis John Jewel, who was by this time bishop of Salisbury, Martyr quips:

The Synode of Trente feigneth as though it woulde proceede, but it goeth so slowlie forward, as in these five Sessions thereof it hath decreed nothing that maie serve to the purpose. Those things that it doeth desire bee olde and mouldie, so as they cannot seeme to do the part of fathers but of beetles, which alwaies turne over the selfe same dongue of traditions.<sup>171</sup>

His position is very clear; theological authority is found foundationally only in Scripture. Such authority is based on the divine inspiration of Scripture—it is the Spirit that undergirds its power.<sup>172</sup>

Because of its divine origin, Scripture is infallible and tradition, because of its human origin, fallible: "Therefore everything should be promptly referred to the testing of the Scripture, and so through those things that are certain we will judge things uncertain, and by those things which are firm will decide about what is doubtful. For as the Word of God is trustworthy and abides forever, so the beliefs of men are uncertain and are always untrustworthy."<sup>173</sup> For Vermigli the Roman Church's insistence on

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<sup>170</sup> LLS 247; See *Creeds and Confessions of Faith in the Christian Tradition*, Vol. 2, ed. Pelikan and Hotchkiss (New Haven: Yale, 2003), 821ff.; Hubert Jedin, *A History of the Council of Trent* (St. Louis: Herder, 1957-60).

<sup>171</sup> CP, Appendix 129. This letter of Vermigli to Jewel dated Zurich 24 August 1562 is a fairly entertaining and personal one, coming from the pen of one who rarely shows his emotion. Such probably reveals the deep friendship between the two men—Jewel having lived with Vermigli before returning to England to become bishop under Elizabeth. For more on Vermigli's view of Trent see PJ, 156ff.

<sup>172</sup> LAM, 170; PMR, 73; PW, 179.

<sup>173</sup> PMR, 75; See PMR, 70.

equalizing Tradition with Scripture makes of them the Anti-Christ in that they want to have their own authority trump that of God.<sup>174</sup> Indeed, it is the Devil's main ploy to distract human beings from the Word by setting up human traditions—such was the source of the fall of Adam and continues to be the downfall of humanity.<sup>175</sup> Humans continue to want to be their own masters and so they “neglect the word of God and chase after the promise of a so-called knowledge, as if they could be gods.”<sup>176</sup> But, thinks Vermigli, God is the only God; Scripture is the only authority on theological truth.<sup>177</sup> Using an interesting metaphor, Vermigli states that the student of the Bible should “rather followe the bees than the spiders, sucking thereout most sweet juice, and not deadlie poison.”<sup>178</sup>

Not only does the Spirit prove Scripture's authority, but Scripture proves its own authority as well.<sup>179</sup> Central to his theory of interpretation, Vermigli argues that Scripture itself is its own foremost interpreter. When there is a question regarding something taught in Scripture, it is not the Church or Tradition which must answer the debate but other clearer passages of Scripture. Such rule is not new to Vermigli, but again from Augustine's *De Doctrina Christiana*. Vermigli overtly cites Augustine as stating that one

<sup>174</sup> JUD, 5r.

<sup>175</sup> LLS, 287ff.

<sup>176</sup> LLS, 288.

<sup>177</sup> “Therefore the first principle according to which all true theological truths are determined should be this: ‘the Lord has spoken’ [dominus dixit]. This clarity is not to be looked for from the light of human understanding or our reason, but from the light of faith which should be most persuasive to us, and which is contained in the sacred writings.” PMR, 70; Also PMR, 69-71; LLS, 278, 314 and 334; GEN, 1r; PW, 183ff.

<sup>178</sup> CP, I.45.

<sup>179</sup> PMR, 73. Vermigli holds that the Holy Spirit and Scripture itself are the two marks by which one discovers the truth of the sacred writings.

should not restrict himself to the ideas of the Fathers or of the councils, but rather to be open first to other passages of Scripture.<sup>180</sup> Despite what the Catholic Church might think, Vermigli knows that the Fathers are difficult to understand:

But meanwhile they either do not see or pretend not to see what a labyrinth the Fathers are, what twists and turns are found in their writings, what an endless task it is to read through them all and to remember what you have read... [Even Lombard] needed infinite interpreters; in his first line stand Thomas, Scotus, and Ockham, who could say nothing so scholastically or magisterially (to use their terminology) that they led the truth out of darkness... As is most obvious, all these made so much progress that they filled everything with darkness. Why then do we who are such wise and learned men want to go astray? Let us go back, I beg you, let us go back to the first sources of the Scriptures.<sup>181</sup>

Further, the Fathers and councils are certainly neither without error nor in total agreement—they themselves went back to Scripture as their source of authority.<sup>182</sup> As Constantine urged Eusebius to solve controversies by using the Scripture, so Vermigli says the theologian should continue to use Scripture as the authority in theological debate.<sup>183</sup>

<sup>180</sup> PMR, 74. See also Augustine, *On Christian Teaching*, 68.

<sup>181</sup> PMR, 75. Interestingly, Vermigli seems to use the word ‘labyrinth’ when referring to his opponents or their sources of authority. (For example, *LLS*, 331; *PMR*, 153) As such, he bolsters Richard Muller’s claim that William Bouwsma misconstrued Calvin’s thought as being characterized by ‘labyrinths.’ Indeed, for both Vermigli and Calvin it was their opponent’s ideas and not their own which were unclear and labyrinthine. See Muller, *The Unaccommodated Calvin*, 4ff. and William J. Bouwsma, *John Calvin: A Sixteenth-Century Portrait* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988).

<sup>182</sup> Vermigli cites the well-known examples of the the councils of Rimini with the Arians and Ephesus with Eutyches. At the council of Constance, notes Vermigli, the laity was given a defective form of the sacrament. *PMR*, 75; *LLS*, 282; Alfred Schindler characterizes Martyr’s position well: “Nur die Schrift ist klar und eine Autorität, die Autorität; Konzilien, canones und Väterzitate haben bestenfalls eine *geliehene* Autorität, die von Fall zu Fall nachgewiesen werden muß. Sie sind immer noch viel besser als andere, vor allem mittelalterliche Autoren, wegen ihrer vetustas, die im allgemeinen den Lehrmeinungen der recentiores (Neueren) überlegen ist.” Alfred Schindler, “Vermigli und die Kirchenväter,” in *Peter Martyr Vermigli: Humanism Republicanism, Reformation*, eds. Emidio Campi, Frank A. James III, and Peter Opitz (Geneva: Droz, 2002), 40.

<sup>183</sup> PMR, 72.

The Catholics, however, had a star witness against the attack of Vermigli: none other than Augustine. They also claimed Augustinian heritage and cited Augustine's famous dictum against a letter of Fundamentus that had it not been for the authority of the Church, he would not have believed the Gospel.<sup>184</sup> In citing this objection, Vermigli knows that it is critical to have Augustine on his side. He cites the passage from Augustine as saying not simply that Augustine was *moved* by the Church to believe the Scriptures, but was *helped to move* by the Church.<sup>185</sup> Vermigli writes of the Church: "And bycause the ministers of the Churche are his instrumentes, they are rather to be sayd to move with, than absolutely to move."<sup>186</sup> Further, Vermigli cites the famous conversion story in Augustine's *Confessions* that it was the Scriptures that prompted the scales to fall from Augustine's eyes.<sup>187</sup>

The authority of the Church, however, was by no means useless to Vermigli. As we have noted, Vermigli had great interest in and respect for the history of the Church—he was one of the great specialists of his age in this regard. Rather than wanting to jettison all theological authority, Vermigli simply wanted to order correctly its use under that of Scripture. The Church has in fact three 'offices' in relation to Scripture.<sup>188</sup> First,

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<sup>184</sup> "Augustine, *Contra epist. Manich...Fundamenti*, 5 (PL 42.176): nisi me catholicae Ecclesiae commoveret auctoritas." *PW*, 182 n. 28

<sup>185</sup> "But the Church (of which we now speak) is not the whole cause of our faith. It only proclaims, preaches, and teaches. Beyond all this there is need of the Holy Spirit, who enlightens hearers and inclines their wills to embrace the teachings that are given. Augustine wisely writes: 'If the authority of the Church had not helped to move [commovisset] me,' but did not simply says: 'had moved [movisset] me.'" *PW*, 182; Also *JUD*, 5v. and *PMR*, 74. See Douglas H. Shantz "Vermigli on Tradition and the Fathers: Patristic Perspectives from his Commentary on I Corinthians," in *Peter Martyr Vermigli and the European Reformations*, 129.

<sup>186</sup> *JUD*, 5v.

<sup>187</sup> *PMR*, 71.

<sup>188</sup> *JUD*, 5r.

the Church as a witness or notary has kept the holy books from corruption. Second, the Church is called to proclaim faithfully what is written in these.<sup>189</sup> As such, it is not to produce new doctrines, but only those which reflect Scripture. The Catholics would retort that this is precisely what Protestants were doing, but Vermigli would reply that it was indeed the Catholics who had gone astray.<sup>190</sup> Finally, the Church is to discern which books are sincere and uncorrupted and which are counterfeit and Apocryphal.<sup>191</sup> The selection of this Canon must not be arbitrary, but, again, in reliance on the Spirit of God. The Church is not in a place to “Lord it over the faithful” but to be faithful stewards of the deposit.<sup>192</sup> Writes Vermigli of the place of the Church: “This is it therefore that the Churche moveth withall to beleve the Gospell, bycause faithfully it kepeth the holy scriptures, preacheth them, and discerneth them from straunge Scriptures.”<sup>193</sup>

## VI. Interpreting Scripture

### A. The Holy Spirit and Faith

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<sup>189</sup> “We believe the Scriptures because we have been inspired by God’s Spirit, not on account of church authority, because our faith is not from human beings but from God. Although the church fathers gave evidence concerning the Scriptures, it was done by the Spirit of God. We who are also endowed by the Spirit receive the Scriptures that the church fathers received. By no means is human nature, which is rebellious to God and all things spiritual, moved by their authority to believe the Scriptures. We nonetheless commend the fathers’ diligence directed to conserving the Scriptures, their solicitude in preaching, and other things of this sort.” *LAM*, 170.

<sup>190</sup> *ROM* 4r and 61v; Vermigli certainly did not have a modern fondness of new ideas: “But in the Gospell, newness must speciallie be shunned, and therefore he testifieth in everie place, that the Gospell is ancient, and was ordained of God from the beginning.” *CP*, I.99

<sup>191</sup> *JUD*, 5r; *PW*, 182.

<sup>192</sup> *PMR*, 74.

<sup>193</sup> *JUD*, 5v.



To have the proper effect of Scripture's signifying power one needs properly to interpret it. Vermigli spends a great deal of time on preparing for and actually interpreting Scripture. In fact, interpreting Scripture and training other young men to interpret it in turn was his main profession. It is no surprise then that he carefully reflected upon the correct method to use when approaching Scripture. As with the treatments of the description of Scripture and its authority, so Vermigli's treatment of the task of exegesis begins with the foundational role of the Holy Spirit and of faith. The same Holy Spirit who inspired and authorizes the text will also illumine the mind of the faithful interpreter.<sup>194</sup> Vermigli told his students, "We must also ask God with our most fervent prayers that we may approach the sacred reading taught by the Holy Spirit. Unless he is given to us, the holy Scripture will be for us the letter that kills. Those who do not possess the Spirit acquire no fruit from the divine reading because they grasp not the Scriptures but possess the corpses of the Scripture."<sup>195</sup> Without the Spirit the interpretation of Scripture will alienate the mind of the interpreter and offend the ears of the hearer.<sup>196</sup> Such would be an over-carnalization of Scripture—analogueous to having the human nature of Christ without the divine.

With the Spirit the interpreter needs faith. Actually, Vermigli posits that this faith is a gift of that Spirit who interprets. As such the interpreter is totally dependent on the Spirit and can not boast in his own wisdom or understanding. With this Vermigli warns his students:

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<sup>194</sup> *PMR*, 76; *LLS*, 296.

<sup>195</sup> *LLS*, 285.

<sup>196</sup> *LLS*, 286.

the location or school of this philosophy is heaven; they therefore who creep along the ground and have not made their commonwealth in heaven, as the Apostle commanded, are in danger lest they waste their efforts in studying. In addition we must not be silent: the teacher of this subject is the Holy Spirit. Although you will have had countless teachers, preachers, instructors, and pedagogues, unless the Holy Spirit refashions your inmost hearts, they will all be sweating in vain.<sup>197</sup>

In order to know the heavenly revelation in Scripture the student needs to be illuminated by the Holy Spirit and given the gift of faith. This faith is not an 'historic faith' (i.e. acknowledgment that certain events actually did happen) or a 'faith of miracles' (i.e. belief that desires to see more miracles), but a real, justifying faith "whereby wee being inspired from heaven, doo livelie and effectuellie cleave to the promise of Gods mercie."<sup>198</sup> This lively faith coupled with the Spirit of God is not optional in the exegesis of Scripture, but required.<sup>199</sup>

The interpreter can be assured of God's presence when truly seeking to faithfully expound the Scriptures. Vermigli assures his students, "God is understood by these titles of the lips, and while we are speaking with him in the Scriptures, he undoubtedly is graciously present."<sup>200</sup> As such, the assured interpreter has an important role to play. God uses the interpreter, his outward instrument, in the work of exegeting the Word of God. Here it is important to note that it is not simply faith and the Holy Spirit which automatically produce proper interpretation—much study is required. Certainly prayer

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<sup>197</sup> *LLS*, 297.

<sup>198</sup> *CP*, I.69; See *EW*, 53ff. and *CP*, I.15-16.

<sup>199</sup> *GEN*, 1v.

<sup>200</sup> *LLS*, 284.

and the presence of the Holy Spirit are needed, but the interpreter needs to be prepared to become intimately acquainted with the written Word as well.<sup>201</sup>

## **B. Literal Interpretation**

As was characteristic of the Protestants of his time, Vermigli generally holds that the primary interpretation of Scripture is literal.<sup>202</sup> His style of exegesis is characterized by an intense philological study of the texts in their original languages and undergirded with the methodological principles that Scripture is its own proper interpreter and it is clear in all things necessary for Salvation. Throughout his lectures and commentaries these methodological principles can be easily found.

### *i. Perspecuitas*

Vermigli's approach to interpreting Scripture begins with the principle that all things necessary for salvation are clearly revealed.<sup>203</sup> As such, he counters the argument that Scripture is too obscure for the common man to understand. On the contrary, argues Vermigli, God's revelation in Scripture is much clearer than that found anywhere else (i.e. in philosophy or nature):

Some men complain that the Scriptures are so hard that from them few can build the house of God. Still these men ought to know that those things which are necessary for salvation are easily understood by all men. God no less provides for men in this respect than he does in the nature of things where undoubtedly we see that those things which are necessary for life are not hard to get. Then it is merely a trick played on us to say that those things which help for salvation are very intricate and obscure for us in the holy Scriptures.<sup>204</sup>

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<sup>201</sup> PMR, 76; LLS, 282, 303, 329.

<sup>202</sup> See Bray, *Biblical Interpretation*, 176ff. and 201ff.

<sup>203</sup> PMR, 70, 73; CP, I.46; LLS, 266, 281, 282, 284, 295, 319, 331.

<sup>204</sup> LLS, 266.

The fact that the Scriptures can be understood by all is a powerful argument against the substitution of a neo-Platonic theurgic experience of God's Word. Vermigli is very clear that Scripture's true and only power is not in some sort of magical recitation, but in its examination and understanding. It is not beyond comprehension, but indeed can and must be comprehended.<sup>205</sup> Actually, Scripture is often not clear because of our laziness or stupidity, not because it is obscure.<sup>206</sup>

ii. *Textual and Philological Study*

This clear understanding of Scripture mainly is achieved through two actions: studying the words and sentences as they occur and comparing these words and sentences with others throughout Scripture.<sup>207</sup> The first action is well displayed throughout Vermigli's corpus of writings. As is well-known, Vermigli was a great scholar of the original Hebrew and Greek texts of Scripture.<sup>208</sup> As such he evidenced clear characteristics of the humanists of his day.<sup>209</sup> Before getting at the message of Scripture, it was necessary to understand the individual words and phrases of Scripture. Martyr is appreciative of the medieval Jewish commentator Ibn Ezra in this regard: "For as Ibn Ezra rightly observed, to understand the verbal sense in these divine matters is something

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<sup>205</sup> *LLS*, 295; *CP*, I.47.

<sup>206</sup> *LLS*, 282; *PMR*, 76.

<sup>207</sup> *LLS*, 285.

<sup>208</sup> See Shute, in *LAM*, xv ff.; Kim, "The Exegetical Method and Message," 48.

<sup>209</sup> *LLS*, 256.

solid, like the body. When someone appropriates the body for himself, he will easily be able to put over it a variety of clothes.”<sup>210</sup>

Vermigli’s long and detailed comments were meant to be the foundation of theological reflection—indeed, this is the basis of his *Loci Communes*. Once he achieved a solid philologically-based literal interpretation, he proceeded to link it with other themes in Scripture in order to answer relevant theological or philosophical questions.<sup>211</sup> Such was important for it is not possible to have a living, proper interpretation without a living, whole body. Just as Jesus Christ must have a *real* body to be mediator, so must Scriptural interpretation have a *real* body (i.e. the literal interpretation of Scripture) to be understood. The ‘human nature’ of Scripture is its written words.

iii. ‘The Most Useful and Joyous Hunt’: *Analogia Fidei*

The second action in understanding Scripture is comparing these studied words and phrases with others in Scripture. Vermigli likens such comparison to a hunt: “Nothing is more helpful for explaining the Scriptures than the sacred letters themselves. This is both a useful and a joyous hunt, not for deer and boars, but for heavenly treasures, which we can take with us as food for our journey all the way to heaven.”<sup>212</sup> The hunt is necessary because textual or philological study alone does not always give clear results. This second action is necessary because it allows the interpreter to gain clearer light on difficult issues. Such principle is based on the fact that the principal author of the whole of Scripture is the Holy Spirit and thus no contradiction can be present.<sup>213</sup> Thus,

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<sup>210</sup> LAM, 7.

<sup>211</sup> LAM, 7; LLS, 235.

<sup>212</sup> LLS, 285.

<sup>213</sup> LLS, 189.

Vermigli's hermeneutic claims that Scripture is its own proper interpreter.<sup>214</sup> In this, again, Vermigli is clearly following Augustine's argument in *De Doctrina Christiana*.<sup>215</sup> Augustine's little book on hermeneutics clearly showed that to resolve obscurities in the text, the best method was to compare with more clear passages.<sup>216</sup>

iv. *Allegory?*

Judging by his strong penchant for literal exegesis, it is interesting that Vermigli nevertheless on occasion has something positive to say about allegory. Indeed, most often Vermigli stands clearly against allegorical exegesis. In the introduction to a sermon during his stay at Oxford on the death of Christ from Paul's letter to the Philippians, Vermigli makes clear his position on his Catholic counterpart's penchant for the multiple senses of Scripture:

They divided the garments of Christ, that is, the Scriptures in which he is wrapped, into many senses (the historical, allegorical, tropological, and anagogic), to the point that they turn up their noses at the literal sense and the people of God are deceived by human dreams. By their license in making distinctions and writing glosses they so mutilate and divide everything that nothing survives intact.<sup>217</sup>

Such uneasiness with allegorical interpretation is spread throughout his writings. Often he will criticise a Church father for allegorizing unnecessarily.<sup>218</sup> Such over-allegorization would clearly be an over-carnalization of the text—much more is given to the words than they, coupled with the Spirit, will allow.

<sup>214</sup> *PMR*, 70, 76, 77; *LLS*, 266, 282; *CP*, I.46.

<sup>215</sup> *PMR*, 74; *DIAL*, 198ff.; *OTD*, 63; *JUD*, 4v; *ROM*, 3v.

<sup>216</sup> Augustine. *On Christian Doctrine*. III.ii; Although Vermigli's indebtedness to Augustine is clear, Vermigli also says this principle is in Scripture. In II Timothy 4 Paul asks Timothy to study the Scriptures and even that he wanted his parchments so that he too could compare Scripture with Scripture. *PMR*, 76.

<sup>217</sup> *LLS*, 247.

<sup>218</sup> *CP*, I.124.

Students of Vermigli should not be too quick, however, to *simply* state that allegorical exegesis was altogether denied by Vermigli.<sup>219</sup> John L. Thompson has shown convincingly that indeed a limited kind of allegory has survived in Vermigli's writings.<sup>220</sup> Vermigli was not categorically against allegory, but against allegory not warranted by the intention of the author or the historical sense itself. For example, Vermigli is more open to the use of allegory when tied to the historical narrative in the introduction to his

Genesis commentary:

Similarly the promises about Christ either happen by words of oracles or by the types of the acts done by the fathers, and they are contained in each of the two modes. Neither types nor allegories are to be despised, since in the opinion of Paul and in the opinion of Christ there is use of them: but one ought to use them moderately and appropriately, and in such a way that the historical narrative is by no means despised.<sup>221</sup>

Often the allegorical meaning of a text was the intentional or historical meaning of the text. Interpreters cannot simply or categorically reject allegorical interpretation if the Scriptures themselves used it.<sup>222</sup>

Vermigli's hermeneutical method here reflects closely his understanding of Christology and his continued interest in saying neither too much nor too little of the

<sup>219</sup> So James, "Vermigli, Peter Martyr," 239-245 and Kim "The Exegetical Method and Message," 149ff. It is not helpful to assume Vermigli's position on the basis of other reformers on this point. Kim (p. 167) unhelpfully cites Puckett here. For Puckett's fuller understanding see: *John Calvin's Exegesis of the Old Testament* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1995), 106-113.

<sup>220</sup> "A categorical elimination of allegory and typology was simply impossible, for Scripture itself offers numerous allegories and typologies which therefore bear the stamp of canonical authority; and other venerable types and figures were widely believed to be implied in Scripture, even if no quite explicit." Thompson, "The survival of allegorical argumentation," 266.

<sup>221</sup> *GEN*, 1v. "Promissa item de Christo, aut fiunt oraculorum verbis, aut typis rerum a patribus gestarum, & hic utroque modo continentur. Nec typi sive Allegoriae sunt contemnendae, tum tam apud Paulum quam apud Christum sit illarum usus: sed moderate & tempestive oportet vti, ita etiam vt narratio historica minime contemnatur."

<sup>222</sup> *CP*, I.101.

outward instruments. Saying too much would be to add additional meaning or power to the Scripture than what the Spirit would have it say. Saying too little would take away the signifying power from the Scriptures that is rightly there. Scripture must be interpreted with both letter and Spirit as one entity (reflecting the one *person* of the incarnate Christ) and not in isolation from each other.

### C. Theological Education

Because the proper interpretation of Scripture is such an important theme in Vermigli's writings, it is not surprising that he has strong opinions about the proper formation of students of Scripture. Several general themes appear commonly in Vermigli's musings about theological education.<sup>223</sup> Above all Vermigli is trying to encourage students for the ministry to appreciate the importance of theological education.<sup>223</sup> To do this Vermigli needs to establish the place of Scripture and the ministry in general. Vermigli bemoans on several occasions the poor reputation that pastors have. This reputation of poor rewards and no respect led many young men to not be interested in the arduous task of theological study.<sup>224</sup> Indeed, Vermigli here points to the general problems protestant theological faculties were having with recruitment. Karin Maag writes that Bullinger's efforts at the Zurich *Lectorium* to attract new students met with uneven success, largely because the vocation of ministry was held in low regard.

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<sup>223</sup> *EW*, 130; *CP*, I.57.

<sup>224</sup> "Young men also strenuously avoid this work. For they earnestly complain that the rewards of virtues have now disappeared. 'When I shall continually,' they say, 'give my work to learning and in a manner kill myself with study, what reward shall I reap? I shall be a pastor at twenty pounds a year, at the most. Away with divinity: give me law, give me physics, give me astrology, or anything else than the holy Scriptures; I am poor enough by myself and have no need of divinity to make me more impoverished.'" *LLS*, 265; See *LLS*, 259, 264 and 300.



“As was the case in other areas throughout the Reformation’s consolidation phase in the sixteenth century,” she writes, “parents, especially those with a certain level of income, were unwilling to direct their sons into a profession which offered little financial stability or reward, and which demanded years of training.”<sup>225</sup> Such a lamentable situation should not be, thinks Vermigli, for a student of theology should receive the highest respect. Rather than draw back from promoting theological education, Vermigli thinks that this shortage of pastors should actually push teachers even more strongly forward.<sup>226</sup> It is the study of Scripture that is the key to the respect a pastor will receive. The sacred Scriptures make the future pastor’s vocation successful.<sup>227</sup> The pastorate is indeed honourable, argues Vermigli; one simply needs to adopt Scripture’s perspective on the matter.

Besides promoting faithful theological education, Vermigli often denigrates the confused and theologically useless education of the Catholics.<sup>228</sup> He is unabashed in his criticism:

I am not ignorant that there are numerous crowds, indeed flocks and herds of people, who teach theology at Paris, Louvain, Salamanca, Bologna, and Padua and in many other universities. But I ask you, what kind of theology? One dark, intricate, thorny, and rustic and befouled on all sides by diabolical controversies so that in the huge number of those who proclaim themselves theologians, you will find scarcely one pure and sincere theologian.<sup>229</sup>

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<sup>225</sup> Karin Maag, *The Genevan Academy: Seminary or University?* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1995), 135.

<sup>226</sup> *LLS*, 149, 259 and 329; See also *ROM*, 14v.

<sup>227</sup> *LLS*, 303 and 320.

<sup>228</sup> *LLS*, 247 and 319.

<sup>229</sup> *LLS*, 327. See Vermigli’s recommendations to the Polish Churches: *LLS*, 149.

Such comments are not simply propaganda by one who knows nothing about the Catholic system of education, but by one who knew it as well as any other scholar of his age. As a youth Vermigli was himself a student of the University of Padua. Hence, the style and content of his lectures after his flight from Italy in 1542 are not just 'business as usual' but a conscious response to what he had previously lived. This is not to say that he totally rejected the content or style of his own education, but that he re-ordered it according to Scriptural norms.

The re-ordering place of Scripture in theological education is most clearly seen in contrast to that of the place of philosophy. The difference between the two is clearly presented in Vermigli's writings and lectures. Although philosophy is good to a certain extent Vermigli clearly sees its limitations.<sup>230</sup> The study of the sacred letters provides answers to foundational questions which cannot be found in philosophy.<sup>231</sup> Specifically, true knowledge of God is impossible without theology. Vermigli states, "But as regards the end, namely our truly knowing God from his effects and how we can use his creatures more virtuously and devoutly, natural science when compared to theology is far more negligent, indeed blind, deaf and dumb."<sup>232</sup> Only from Scripture can one learn of the God who set up the law of nature, but also continues to direct, temper and moderate it. Further, it belongs only to God alone by his Word to establish and define the true mean of virtue and justice. When men try to find such a mean elsewhere, for example in philosophy alone, they try to seek "water from flintstone, wool from a donkey; they are

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<sup>230</sup> *CP*, I.5 and 58

<sup>231</sup> *CP*, I.7 and 17; *LLS*, 296 and 333; *GEN*, 1r.

<sup>232</sup> *LLS*, 314.

hunting the winds with a net, building on sand, drawing water with a sieve.”<sup>233</sup> In effect, searching for God and virtue in philosophy alone is a complete waste of their time and effort.<sup>234</sup> Philosophy can be a useful aid to clarify theology, but it certainly is not a source for theological truth.<sup>235</sup> In the same vein, Vermigli mentions that the writings of the Fathers, Jewish commentators and even contemporary theologians—these can be helpful tools in the process of exegesis, but they are not the sources of spiritual authority on their own.<sup>236</sup>

## VII. Preaching and the Pastoral Ministry

### A. Preaching and the Spirit

Perhaps, though, Vermigli’s hearers were not convinced simply by his promotion of the importance of Scripture. He also had to show them that they were indeed capable of using such a respect-worthy tool. Interestingly, Vermigli claims that not only is Scripture an outward instrument of the Spirit’s work, but also the pastor himself.<sup>237</sup> Yet, in the same way as Scripture, the ‘author’ of true and effective preaching is the Spirit.<sup>238</sup> The minister has no authority to direct the Church from any other source than from the Holy Spirit. Anything profitable brought forth in the Church cannot be based on the

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<sup>233</sup> *LLS*, 316. This is one of the very few places that Vermigli even approaches being comical. For the most part, he is very serious about orthodoxy, heresy, or life in general.

<sup>234</sup> *LLS*, 314 and 316.

<sup>235</sup> See chapter 1 for distinctions on ‘scholasticism.’

<sup>236</sup> *LLS*, 148, 283 and 331; *EW*, 137; *LC*, IV.4; See Donnelly, *Calvinism and Scholasticism*, 33; Jerome Friedman, “Sixteenth-Century Christian-Hebraica: Scripture and the Renaissance Myth of the Past,” *Sixteenth Century Journal* 11, no. 4 (Winter, 1980): 67-85.

<sup>237</sup> *JUD*, 5v.

<sup>238</sup> *LLS*, 252 and 297; *CP*, IV.4, 21, 23; *EW*, 114.

minister's own work alone, but only when "holpen by the grace of God."<sup>239</sup> When upheld by the Spirit, the Minister, writes Vermigli, is an organ and instrument of our faith which should receive honour—not too much honour, but that which is merited of an instrument of the Spirit.<sup>240</sup>

The instrumentality of the minister is thus comparable to that of the Sacrament. Scripture often speaks of the efficacy of the two parts—Spirit and sign—as if they were one. As such the power of the minister is magnified:

But if thou consider them as they be ioyned unto God, and as he is of efficacie in them; and as the action of the holie Ghost is coupled with the action of the Ministers, so that after some sort one is made of those two, that which belongeth unto the one part is by the figure Synecdoche attributed unto another. And after this manner the ministers of the Church are said to worke those things which we have declared. And that which we have set downe touching the Ministers, must also be iudged of the Sacraments: for if thou wilt regard them as simple and bare figures, thou shalt verie much erre if thou ascribe either the forgiveness of sinnes or thy salvation unto them. But if in thy minde thou referre these things unto that which they signifie, and the same imbrace by faith as thou oughtest to doe, assuredlie thou shalt drawe from thence both salvation and remission of sinnes, and thou shalt receive and reverence them as excellent giftes of God.<sup>241</sup>

As with the interpretation of Scripture the *signifying* power of the minister is clearly present in Vermigli's comments. As such, a minister needs to take great caution to correctly signify the inward power of the Spirit and not abuse his office.<sup>242</sup>

The instrumentality of the pastor is exemplified in Vermigli's understanding of the Pastor's calling. Not only is the pastor to perceive a call from the Lord, but also receive an actual call from a Church. It is not up to the individual pastor's whim to

<sup>239</sup> CP, IV.6.

<sup>240</sup> CP, IV.22 ff.; LLS, 303; See Fuller, "Sacrifice and Sacrament," 234.

<sup>241</sup> CP, IV.24.

<sup>242</sup> CP, IV.24.

decide where to go, but rather on the work of the Spirit and the outward calling of the Church. He steers a middle course between the Anabaptists and the Catholics. On the one hand, Vermigli's speaks against the Anabaptist concept of a calling to the ministry based on one's own opinion or pleasure.<sup>243</sup> The Spirit of God, says Vermigli, is one of order—an order expressed outwardly in the Church.<sup>244</sup> Yet, on the other hand, he also criticises the Catholic ordination which is too fixed on an external orderliness, too much based on the outward calling of the Church and an ontological indelibility.<sup>245</sup>

### **B. Preaching and the Word**

In reliance on the Spirit, Vermigli writes, the minister's main task is to preach the Word revealed by God. As such he is not to promote himself, the church or anything else other than that revealed in Scripture. The 'mightie simplenesse' of the ministry is that it has but one function.<sup>246</sup> His work is like that of a town crier—to pronounce exactly that which he has been given.<sup>247</sup> It is this outward preaching that will work on the heart of the hearers which has been "inwardly mollified by God."<sup>248</sup> In the present spiritual war, the Spirit and Scripture are the pastor's weapons, his arsenal for resisting the enemy.<sup>249</sup> In

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<sup>243</sup> *CP*, IV.8; James Ford notes that Calvin also critiqued a desire for knowledge not mediated by Scripture or the church. James Thomas Ford, "Preaching in the Reformed Tradition," in *Preachers and People in the Reformations and Early Modern Period*, ed. Larissa Taylor (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 65-88.

<sup>244</sup> *CP*, IV.9.

<sup>245</sup> *CP*, IV.14.

<sup>246</sup> *CP*, IV.25; See Ford, "Preaching," 71.

<sup>247</sup> *JUD*, 5r ff.; *CP*, IV.17

<sup>248</sup> *LLS*, 271.

<sup>249</sup> *LLS*, 148 and 279.

the hands of the pastor Scripture is a very powerful armament and will accomplish that which it promises.<sup>250</sup>

Vermigli is clear that the main occupation of a pastor is to nourish his flock with the Word. This conception of the pastoral ministry is clearly contrasted in his thought to that of the practice of the Catholic priesthood of his time. Rather than nourish their people with the Word of God, they seek to gain worldly honour. The power they seek to signify, thinks Vermigli, is not that of the Spirit, but their own power.<sup>251</sup> In this sense they are a sign of themselves rather than a sign of the inward spiritual reality.<sup>252</sup> They are not a suitable instrument for the Word of God when they act in any other way than as a true pastor.<sup>253</sup> Even further, a true pastor is one who preaches and lives this preached word, not one who 'bottles it up' in a monastery.<sup>254</sup>

Most clear is his criticism of the Catholic Church in his discussion of the 'keys' of the kingdom. The 'keys' are not some sort of mystical power given only to Peter to lock and unlock the storehouse of grace, but are rather the clear and consistent preaching and acceptance of the word of God.<sup>255</sup> The 'keys', thinks Vermigli, were given to the whole Church and should be generously used by all. The soul of the individual believer cannot

<sup>250</sup> *LLS*, 291.

<sup>251</sup> *CP*, IV.17 and 24.

<sup>252</sup> *ROM*, 1r.

<sup>253</sup> "Aristotle in his first booke of Politikes saith, that everie one instrument is meete for one only worke: Wherefore it is not meete for the ministers of Christ to plaie the part of souldiers, huntsmen, Marchauntes, or Marriners." *CP*, IV.18.

<sup>254</sup> *EW*, 53; *LLS*, 305; *GEN*, 1r; *JUD*, Bii r; Fritz Büsser remarks: "Reiche Erfahrungen im menschlichen Bereich sammelte Vermigli natürlich auch, vor vielem andern, weil er sein Leben lang Theorie und Praxis miteinander verbunden hat, wissenschaftliche Exegese mit Unterricht und Predigt, Kirchenrecht und – Leitung, oder umfassender, existentiell formuliert, Glauben und Leben." Büsser, "Vermigli in Zürich," 208.

be fed by some mystical 'keys' in Rome, but by the local preaching of the Word.<sup>256</sup>

Preaching should not be reserved, but for every pastor:

We should be ashamed of ourselves because we seldom if ever preach the Gospel of Christ in the Church, and preach it so frigidly that we might easily seem to be engaged in outside business. No strong feelings are brought to bear, nothing earnest or heartfelt takes place, but rather everything is conducted like some ritual ceremony.<sup>257</sup>

The commandment of Christ to go to the whole world was not only for the Apostles, but for every pastor in every place.<sup>258</sup> One of the main problems of Catholicism of his time was the lack of true preaching.<sup>259</sup> Preaching, says Vermigli, has been relegated to the bottom of the list of episcopal duties.<sup>260</sup> Vermigli, bucking this trend, calls for pastors to be suitable instruments and to preach the Word.<sup>261</sup> Suitable instruments will faithfully seek to signify the divine truth of the Gospel rather than their own honour. By humbly preaching the Word they will actually find honour.<sup>262</sup>

### VIII. Conclusion

It is clear that Vermigli understands Scripture as an outward instrument of God in his work of salvation. Although not necessary for God, he has nonetheless chosen this

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<sup>255</sup> *LLS*, 231ff.; *EW*, 72.

<sup>256</sup> *LLS*, 232.

<sup>257</sup> *LLS*, 299.

<sup>258</sup> *CP*, IV.1; *LLS*, 293; *LAM*, 157ff.

<sup>259</sup> *EW*, 63; *LLS*, 150, 246 and 299; See Thomas Worchester, S.J., "Catholic Sermons," in *Preachers and People in the Reformations and Early Modern Period*, ed. Larissa Taylor (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 3-33.

<sup>260</sup> *EW*, 64ff.

<sup>261</sup> *LLS*, 265 and 304ff.

<sup>262</sup> *ROM*, 5r.

instrument to work out his predestining decree. As such it has an essential role in the work of the Church. The instrumental nature of Scripture can be understood in Vermigli as an Aristotelian instrumental cause, but even more appropriately as an Augustinian *sign* used by God to signify the inward spiritual reality. In both cases Vermigli pleads that the outward instrument be properly understood and handled by the Church and the individual preacher in order to be actually useful. It is the primary source of truth and authority in the Church and can bring honour only when the faithful used it by the Holy Spirit and with faith.



## CHAPTER V

### The Bending of the Knee and the Visible Words of God

#### I. Introduction

In 1682 Louis Maimbourg, a disgraced Jesuit priest wanting to rebuild his reputation, wrote his pocket-sized *Histoire du Calvinisme* in which he traced the rise and proliferation of the Protestant sects in France and Europe. At one point in the work he took up the question of the Colloquy of Poissy. Even though he questioned the foundational legitimacy of this regional meeting (as did the Jesuit General Lainez while attending the colloquy), he nonetheless traced its history and knew its downfall.<sup>1</sup> He took particular interest in describing the perverse and sectarian nature of the Protestant participants. Along with the leader Theodore Beza, there came to the Colloquy a certain Florentine Peter Vermigli, better known as Martyr—a name he chose to take when he apostatized from the Order of Augustinian Canons Regular and seduced, like Luther, a Nun to marry him.<sup>2</sup> Martyr was well-educated and a great preacher, but, says Maimbourg, he had a light and changeable spirit on anything dealing with religion: “at one point he was Lutheran, another Calvinist, and then Zwinglian; for when he was in Zurich he taught theology as a Zwinglian, from where he was called by the Queen Catherine of Navarre and sent from the Magistrates of this Canton as a man of

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<sup>1</sup> Louis Maimbourg, *Histoire du Calvinisme*, dernière ed. suivant la Copie imprimée (Paris: Sebastien Mabre-Cramoisy Imprimeur du roy, rue Saint Jacques, aux Cicognes, 1682).

<sup>2</sup> “Pierre Vermille Florentin, plus connu sous l’autre surnom Martyr qu’il trouva bon de prendre lors qu’il s’estant fait Apostat de l’Ordre des Chanoines Réguliers de Saint Augustin il prit pour femme, à l’exemple du Docteur Martin Luther, une Religieuse qu’il avoit débauchée” Maimbourg, *Histoire du Calvinisme*, 216.

extraordinary knowledge in order to attend this colloquy.”<sup>3</sup> This theological fickleness was reflected in Peter Martyr’s speech. Maimbourg could not quite grasp whether it was Calvinist or Zwinglian, but it was a total failure for, first, it was a long, boring Italian speech and, second, the arguments were tired and had already been refuted by the Ministers, the Cardinal, and the Doctors of the Sorbonne on many occasions.<sup>4</sup> Further, following Martyr’s speech, the Jesuit General spoke and pointed out the clear contradiction in maintaining a ‘real presence’ but ‘purely spiritual.’<sup>5</sup>

French Protestants were not impressed with Maimbourg’s attempt to discredit the early leaders of their cause. One year later, Pierre Jurieu took up his pen to defend point by point the criticisms of Maimbourg.<sup>6</sup> Interestingly, one of the very first men he defends is Peter Martyr. Jurieu is not shy with his pen. He reminds Maimbourg that he too is an apostate of sorts from the Jesuit order, therefore he should not criticise Martyr. In any case, Martyr did not reject the truth, but upheld the truth and was forced out of

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<sup>3</sup> “homme docte à la verité, et grand Prédicateur, mais d’un esprit si peu arrêté si leger et si changeant, sur tout en matiere de créance, qu’il estoit tantost Lutherin, tantost Calviniste, et puis Zuinglin, comme il l’estoit alors à Zurich où il enseignoit la Theologie à la Zuinglienne, et d’où la reine Catherine et le Roy de Navarre le firent venir, l’ayant obtenu des Magistrats de ce Canton, comme un homme d’un sçavoir extraordinaire pour assister à ce Colloque.” Maimbourg, *Histoire du Calvinisme*, 216.

<sup>4</sup> “Ce fut pour lors que Pierre Martyr Florentin, qui estoit alors Calviniste, ou plutôt Zuinglien, fit un long et ennuyeux discours en Italien, dans lequel il tascha de réfuter par ces argumens, si communs et si souvent détruits dont se servent inutilement les Ministres, ce que le Cardinal et les Docteurs de Sorbonne avoient dit tres solidement pour établir par l’Ecriture et par les Peres de l’ancienne Eglise la presence réelle de Jesus-Christ au Saint Sacrement de l’Autel.” Maimbourg, *Histoire du Calvinisme*, 229.

<sup>5</sup> “Et voila justement comme en usoient les Calvinistes en ce Colloque: car ils disoient toujours qu’ils admettoient au Saint Sacrement de l’Eucharistie la presence réelle de Jesus-Christ qui nous est communiqué fort veritablement, mais ils vouloient que ce ne fust que d’une maniere purement spirituelle et par la Foy et que le Corps de Jesus-Christ fust seulement au Ciel, et non ailleurs: ce qui n’étoit rien dire qu’une contradiction toute manifeste.” Maimbourg, *Histoire du Calvinisme*, 231. For Martyr’s reading of this incident see his letter to Bullinger in *CP*, Appendix 155.

<sup>6</sup> Pierre Jurieu, *Histoire du Calvinisme et celle du Papisme mises en Parallele: ou Apologie pour les Reformateurs, pour la Reformation, et pour les Reforme; Divisée en Quatre Parties: Contre le Libelle intitulé l’Histoire du Calvinisme Par Mr. Maimbourg* (Rotterdam: Reinier Leers, 1683).

Italy. As such he was not an apostate.<sup>7</sup> Moreover, he certainly did not 'seduce' a Nun—for there has never been a man wiser, more moderate, and in whom the passions were better regulated than Peter Martyr.<sup>8</sup> Also, it is not even sure that Katherine Dampmartin was a Nun!<sup>9</sup> Most of all, Jurieu argued against the alleged fickleness of Martyr: "There has never been a less-grounded accusation, for there was never a mind so firm, better regulated, and less unfickle."<sup>10</sup> Jurieu writes that when one actually knows about Martyr's life and reads Martyr's writings, which Maimbourg apparently has not, it is clear that he was firm in his positions nor was he swayed by the various theologians which Maimbourg mentioned.<sup>11</sup> Further, Jurieu argues that Maimbourg does not even appreciate the real difference between the groups which he accused Martyr of following.<sup>12</sup>

This little dispute between Maimbourg and Jurieu provides a helpful starting-point to examine the sacramental theology of Vermigli. Despite the confessional interests in defending Martyr and the description of Martyr's saint-like character, Jurieu's characterization of Martyr's life and career seem much more grounded than those of Maimbourg. A cursory reading of Vermigli's writings on the Eucharist from his earliest explanation of the Apostle's Creed to his work at the colloquy of Poissy reveal a remarkable similarity of content. This is all the more remarkable in that the subject of the

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<sup>7</sup> Jurieu, *Histoire du Calvinisme*, 75.

<sup>8</sup> Jurieu, *Histoire du Calvinisme*, 76.

<sup>9</sup> Jurieu, *Histoire du Calvinisme*, 76.

<sup>10</sup> Jurieu, 82. "Il n'y eut jamais d'accusation moins fondée, car jamais esprit ne fut plus ferme, mieux réglé et moins inconstant."

<sup>11</sup> Jurieu, *Histoire du Calvinisme*, 83.

<sup>12</sup> Jurieu, *Histoire du Calvinisme*, 84.

Eucharist is the most frequently discussed in the whole corpus of Vermigli's writings. Indeed, it was Vermigli who wrote what McNair calls "the weightiest single treatise on the eucharist of the entire Reformation"<sup>13</sup>—his 1559 defence of the Eucharist against Stephen Gardiner.<sup>14</sup> At every stop in his Protestant career Vermigli was involved in writing or disputing on the Eucharist. Rather than sway from side to side, it seems that at every turn Vermigli chose to follow a middle path of orthodoxy—a path which attempted to comprehend the correct from both extremes, but rejected excess.<sup>15</sup>

The secondary literature on this topic is the most extensive of any on Martyr largely because of the frequent recurrence of the Eucharistic themes in Peter Martyr's life and writings. Especially in the last fifty years, much has been written. Pride of place goes to Joseph McLelland's work *The Visible Words of God*, which ignited subsequent interest of many others in the subject.<sup>16</sup> McLelland discusses the importance of the sacraments throughout Scripture, shows the significance of the theme of union with Christ in the sacrament, and clearly distinguishes Vermigli's position from the Catholics, Lutherans and Zwinglians. Twenty years after McLelland's foray into the subject, Salvatore Corda wrote his own dissertation discussing the history and content of Vermigli's eucharistic ideas—especially those in the *Defensio* against Gardiner.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> McNair, in *EW*, 12.

<sup>14</sup> *Defensio Doctrinae veteris & Apostolicae de ss. Euch. ... adv. Stephani Gardineri* (Zurich: C. Froshauer, 1559).

<sup>15</sup> *ROM*, 80r.

<sup>16</sup> McLelland further contributed to the work of understanding Vermigli by producing two translations of the *Treatise on the Eucharist* [*OTD* and *DM*].

<sup>17</sup> Salvatore Corda, *Veritas sacramenti: a study in Vermigli's Doctrine of the Lord's Supper* (Zürich: Theologischer Verlag, 1975).

Largely in agreement with McLelland, Corda brought out even more of the depth of Vermigli's teaching. More importantly, several new volumes, most notably volumes in the Peter Martyr Library, provide excellent introductions and critical notes for some of the most important primary texts.<sup>18</sup> Added to these is a more recent article by Don Fuller.<sup>19</sup> Fuller's article provides the springboard for the present chapter, but the other works mentioned provide the more substantive background. All are useful in trying to understand more fully the outward elements of God's grace in Vermigli's teaching on the Eucharist.

Detailed historical surveys of Vermigli's eucharistic teaching have been provided by McLelland and Corda (among others), so an historical survey is unnecessary in the present study.<sup>20</sup> Rather, we will here try to pull together the comments from many documents scattered throughout all the periods of Martyr's Protestant career on the specific question of the guarding of the outward instrument to come to an overall picture of this aspect of his thought. At first glance, much in the Italian period of his life (*i.e.* prior to 1542) can be seen to militate against a strong validation of the outward aspect of the instruments. Yet, as we have seen with his Christology, Vermigli tried hard to steer

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<sup>18</sup> *DM, DIAL, LLS, PMR, OTD, EW.*

<sup>19</sup> Don Fuller, "Sacrifice and Sacrament: Another Eucharistic Contribution from Peter Martyr Vermigli," in *Peter Martyr Vermigli and the European Reformations*, ed. Frank A. James III (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 215-237.

<sup>20</sup> Strasbourg I (1542-1547): "Brief Explanation of the Apostle's Creed" (*EW* 27-79) and "Theses for Debate" (*EW* 91-160); Oxford (1547-1553): *Treatise and Disputation on the Eucharist (OTD)*, Letters to Bucer and Bullinger, (*CP* Appendix), "Second Exhortation" (*DM*), selected *loci* from *Commentary on I Corinthians*; Strasbourg II (1554-1556): Statements before Strasbourg Academy 1553 (*LLS*, 309ff.) and Strasbourg Senate 1556 (*PMR*, 160-164), selected *loci* from *Commentary on Judges*, Letters to Calvin (*CP*, Appendix) and Beza (*LLS*, 133ff.), Letter 'to a Friend' (*DM*), Letter to the Polish Ministers (*LLS*, 142ff.), Letter to the Strangers' Church in London (*LLS*, 184ff.); Zurich (1556-1562): Statements at Colloquy of Poissy (*DM*), *Defensio against Gardiner* and 'Epitome' of *Defensio* (*PMR*, 151ff.), Letter to John Sturm (*CP*, Appendix), selected *loci* from *Commentary on Samuel* and *Commentary on Kings*.

what he considered to be an orthodox middle road between a docetic over-spiritualization and a crass 'Arius-like' materialism.<sup>21</sup> Even in his early commentary on the Apostle's Creed we already see the balanced approach with which he would treat the Eucharist. He certainly has harsh words for what he sees as a carnal idolatry in the Roman doctrine of the mass, but he does not therefore respond by emptying the outward element of all importance.

## II. Instrumentality and the Outward Element

Don Fuller makes the important claim that a major chain in Martyr's sacramental theology is that the sacrament must be intelligible to worshippers and not simply an external theurgical act.<sup>22</sup> He claims that Vermigli is in fact furthering the project of Thomas Aquinas and, ultimately, of Augustine, who push for an *intelligible* reception of the Eucharist over against those such as Pseudo-Dionysius who held principally to the necessity of an *elemental* reception.<sup>23</sup> While the main themes of Fuller's article are persuasive, after reading Vermigli's sacramental theology it becomes apparent that more needs to be said to help us understand the proper place of the outward instrument in Vermigli's theology. It is clearly apparent that Vermigli supports the idea of the intelligibility of the sacrament, the sacrament as *visible word*, but this does not mean that the substance of the sacrament is therefore to be interpreted as purely mental or internal. For all he has to say against the *carnal* use of the sacrament by the transubstantiators,

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<sup>21</sup> Corda, *Veritas Sacramenti*, 133; McLelland, *Visible Words God*, 49.

<sup>22</sup> Fuller, "Sacrifice and Sacrament," 215-237.

<sup>23</sup> Fuller, "Sacrifice and Sacrament," 215 cites Thomas *Summa theologia* I qq. 27-29.

Vermigli still leaves a very important place for the externality of the sacrament. So important a significance, for example, has the outward aspect of the Sacrament for the worshipper that if properly educated he or she can with good conscience bend the knee before the elements of the Eucharist.<sup>24</sup> This conclusion seems, at first glance, to run against the grain of Vermigli's sacramental teaching;<sup>25</sup> yet, with careful study of Vermigli's reading of Scripture and the Church Fathers the crucial importance of the external in the Eucharist will become more apparent

Much in Vermigli's early life and career militated against the validation of the outward aspects of the Eucharist. Vermigli surely felt the pressure of over-spiritualization from Valdesian spirituality in reaction to the constant abuses caused by a carnal understanding of the Eucharist in transubstantiation.<sup>26</sup> Yet as is characteristic of his Eucharistic theologizing in general, he seems to have tried hard to steer a middle road between what he saw to be the purely inward and the crassly outward ways of receiving and celebrating the Eucharist. For the first half of his life Vermigli acknowledges having participated in what he would later call "the idolatry that is committed in every corner of our churches."<sup>27</sup> Highly interesting is that this comment was written less than two years after his flight from Italy. The 'idolatry' to which he refers is what he sees to be the worship of the outward elements of the Eucharist which are understood carnally to be worthy of that worship. Before his flight North, it seems that Vermigli was already seriously re-evaluating his practice of the Eucharist. Simler, Vermigli's friend and

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<sup>24</sup> *OTD* 87.

<sup>25</sup> I.e. *ROM* 8v ff.

<sup>26</sup> See the discussion of Valdesian 'illuminism' in chapter 2 above.

<sup>27</sup> *PMR*, 40.

earliest biographer, writes that upon his departure one of the first things Vermigli did was to celebrate the Lord's Supper "with a Christian ritual."<sup>28</sup> Donnelly supposes Simler is here suggesting that this is the first time Vermigli celebrated the Eucharist in a Reformed manner.<sup>29</sup> It would be fascinating to have more information on what took place at this celebration, but, unfortunately, Simler does not record any more. In seeking freedom in the North, Vermigli found that many were still enslaved in idolatrous notions even outside of Italy (including the Lutherans of Strasbourg!). Vermigli found the importance of the Eucharist to be so great that defending a true understanding of the Eucharist would be one of the central tasks that occupied him for the rest of his life.

The analogical link between revelation of God in Scripture and the correct instrumental use of the Sacrament is explicit in Vermigli's writings. He argues that the whole matter could be "easily and simply understood" if his adversaries would only treat the matter according to Holy Scripture.<sup>30</sup> As it stands, his former colleagues and now adversaries are completely lost in their own 'blind labyrinth' and have lost the whole truth of the matter through argument.<sup>31</sup> No matter how wonderful to look at, any sacramental rite which does not follow the Word of God is useless and is, in essence, only idolatry. Vermigli's Scripture-based sacramental principle is explicit: there can and must be no outward sacramental work that is not ordained in the Word of God.<sup>32</sup> As it is

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<sup>28</sup> Simler, in *LLS*, 26.

<sup>29</sup> Donnelly, in *LLS*, 26 n. 48.

<sup>30</sup> *PMR*, 153.

<sup>31</sup> *PMR*, 153.

<sup>32</sup> *CP*, II.315.



performed among the Catholics the Sacrament is, by contrast, nothing but idolatry. In his comments on the Apostle's Creed shortly after his flight from Italy he bemoans this fact:

There must also be the use of the sacraments, but free and clean of human invention. O poor Supper of the Lord, in how many ways and to what extent you have been contaminated! O mass, mass, how little there remains unadulterated today of what once was! So far as I can see, there is hardly anything that has not been corrupted or ruined by Antichrist and the devil.<sup>33</sup>

Rather than follow the explicit will of God, his former colleagues have followed their own will and fallen into the pit of idolatry.<sup>34</sup>

Several years after his flight when he had become the Regius Professor of Divinity at Oxford, Vermigli was faced again with very strong opposition by a group of ardent Catholics who bitterly opposed his position on the Eucharist. Challenged to a debate, he single-handedly defended the Reformed position on the Eucharist and subsequently published a treatise on the subject with the notes of the debate in 1549.<sup>35</sup> It is in this treatise that we find Vermigli's nuanced and long-held position on the outward aspects of the celebration of the Eucharist. He is not interested in simply rejecting all that might look or sound like transubstantiation, but he wishes, rather, to defend what is an acceptable (i.e. biblical and well-attested by the early Fathers) way to celebrate the Eucharist. This is plainly seen in that he doesn't simply defend his position against that of transubstantiation, but also against the 'Lutheran' and 'Zwinglian' positions on the matter. He is very careful not to slide into errors which are still too close to that of the

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<sup>33</sup> *EW*, 65.

<sup>34</sup> *EW*, 66.

<sup>35</sup> *Tractatio de sacramento eucharistiae, habita in universitate Oxoniensi. Ad hec. Disputatio habita M.D. XLIX* (London: R. Wolfe, 1549). English translation: *OTD*. See McLelland, "Translator's Introduction," in *OTD*, xvii-xlvi.

Catholic Church, or conversely, too far away: he seeks “a golden mean” between the two.<sup>36</sup>

Fuller makes the claim that Vermigli follows the Augustinian or illuminationist tradition as opposed to the Pseudo-Dionysian or theurgical tradition.<sup>37</sup> Theurgical ideas arose in the second century, but were largely adopted by Christian writers in the fourth and fifth centuries. Augustine watched this process take place and was critical of the facile adoption of these ideas by Christians. Robert Dodaro explains that in the time of Augustine the notion of theurgy referred to “the performance of ritual acts: prayers, hymns, and incantations, accompanied by meditation, which were intended to put the soul in contact with spirits and deities so that it would achieve moral purification and peace in an experience of spiritual ecstasy.”<sup>38</sup> What is key in this discussion for Fuller’s point is that several of the major thinkers in this tradition thought that these practices were done independently of any thought process.<sup>39</sup> Although Augustine lived earlier than the fullest Christian rendering of this practice in the thought of Pseudo-Dionysius, he saw enough of the picture to criticise its distinct formulation of the idea of mediation. Augustine posited Christ alone as an effective mediator, so there was no usefulness in the invoking of these spirits and deities through ritual practice. Rather than being instruments for good, the ritual practices that the theurgists used only caused harm.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> McLelland, in *OTD*, xxv.

<sup>37</sup> Fuller, 215.

<sup>38</sup> Robert Dodaro, “Theurgy,” in *Augustine through the Ages: An Encyclopedia*, ed. Allan D. Fitzgerald, O.S.A. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1999), 827.

<sup>39</sup> Dodaro, “Theurgy,” 827.

<sup>40</sup> Dodaro, “Theurgy,” 828.

According to Dodaro, Augustine claimed “true reconciliation and purification of the soul are achieved only as a divine gift or grace, and require an attitude of humility on the part of the suppliant.”<sup>41</sup>

Vermigli clearly sees himself in the same camp as Augustine. His whole theological project depends on these distinctions. Indeed, in writing about the study of Scripture he notes that true understanding of the Scriptures is imparted solely as a gift from the Holy Spirit.<sup>42</sup> Further, he notes that the communication of Scripture is not to be “like some ritual ceremony” (i.e. *ex opere operato*) but needs to be a communication of the verbal and intelligible “word of God.”<sup>43</sup> This intelligible communication is most important for the health of the church: “the Church will be restored only by the medicine of God’s Word, not by riches, not by sacred vestments, not by the selection of foods, not by rites or ceremonies.”<sup>44</sup> Clearly then communication or mediation happens in the first instance through the Word of God. Fuller notes that this is Vermigli’s claim in stating that the sacrament is the ‘Visible Word’ of God. The Sacrament is not an unintelligible rite, but is also included in God’s Word:

From a liturgical point of view, Vermigli is particularly concerned about this Proclan-inspired tendency to conflate physical and spiritual realities because the *elemental* reception of the Eucharistic rite had come to overshadow the *intelligible* reception of saving faith through the *Word*. Vermigli’s conviction (in line with Augustine and Aristotle) is that the Word of God, Holy Scripture, is the principle, and object, the intelligible basis and single locus of the communication of God’s salvific intent.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Dodaro, “Theurgy,” 828.

<sup>42</sup> *PMR*, 76.

<sup>43</sup> *PMR*, 65-66.

<sup>44</sup> *PMR*, 65.

<sup>45</sup> Fuller, “Sacrifice and Sacrament,” 225.

Vermigli, like Augustine, does not consider mediation to happen simply by the acting out of the unintelligible rite: in other words there is no mediation *ex opere operato*.<sup>46</sup>

Fuller helps set the stage for our discussion of the outward instruments in Vermigli's thought by making some fundamental distinctions. For Vermigli, nothing merely outward can effectively mediate grace on its own. Grace comes as a gift from God and is only mediated through Jesus Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit.<sup>47</sup> Yet, this does not mean that the outward aspects of the Eucharist are un-important. The material necessity of the Eucharist and the liturgical expression of this still have an important place in Vermigli's thought. These aspects are seen clearly in his *Oxford Treatise* and his other writings which explain his Eucharistic doctrine.<sup>48</sup> Most helpful in elucidating his thought on this subject are the further distinctions Peter Martyr draws from the Early Church Fathers.<sup>49</sup> The intelligible/elemental distinction of Fuller is important,<sup>50</sup> but this is not the only distinction which helps explain major features in Vermigli's sacramental theology. Using the distinctions involved in refuting the Marcionite heresy and those used to establish orthodox Christology, Vermigli will seek to show the necessary hermeneutical value of the material element. Using the results of these distinctions, Vermigli finds another, specifically the *usus/fruitio* distinction of

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<sup>46</sup> See Muller, "ex opere operato," in his *Dictionary of Latin and Greek Theological Terms*, 108; Peter A. Lillback, "The Early Reformed Covenant Paradigm: Peter Martyr in the Context of Bullinger, Luther, and Calvin," in *Peter Martyr Vermigli and the European Reformations: Semper Reformanda*, ed. Frank A. James III (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 84.

<sup>47</sup> Fuller, "Sacrifice and Sacrament," 229.

<sup>48</sup> *OTD*, 120ff.

<sup>49</sup> *OTD*, 90ff.

<sup>50</sup> Fuller, "Sacrifice and Sacrament," 215.

Augustine, to find a positive place for the outward element in his doctrine of the Eucharist all the while resting upon the intelligible, Word-centred tradition of Augustine.<sup>51</sup>

Before exploring his use of Augustine's distinction, it is important to find what Vermigli states in relation to the presence of Christ in general. Scholars have noted that Vermigli's Christology shapes his understanding of the Sacraments. In *The Visible Words of God*, McLelland demonstrates that the logic of Vermigli's Chalcedonian Christological formulation is reflected in the logic of the relation of sign and thing in the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper.<sup>52</sup> While the sacrament comprises both a sign (bread and wine) and a thing signified (Christ's body and blood), the "sacrament" remains nonetheless a unity.<sup>53</sup> Both sign and signified are understood to be truly present, but they are never to be confused in accordance with Chalcedonian dialectic. In Vermigli's frequent debates with Catholics, Lutherans and Zwinglians his main critiques are more often framed as Christological rather than exegetical. For example, he judges the doctrine of Transubstantiation promulgated at the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215 as wanting owing to its docetic Christological implications.<sup>54</sup>

In the *Oxford Treatise*, Vermigli states that the Roman Catholic position of Transubstantiation is tantamount to—or at least opened the door to—Marcionism. Marcion's docetic Christology denied the human origin of Christ's existence and that his

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<sup>51</sup> See discussion of 'inward and outward – *res* and sign' in chapter 4 above.

<sup>52</sup> McLelland, *Visible Words of God*, 109.

<sup>53</sup> McLelland, *Visible Words of God*, 124.

<sup>54</sup> *OTD*, 35.

body was material (since the material was an unworthy dwelling for divinity).<sup>55</sup> Christ might have *seemed* to be human even for Marcion, but he *really* was not. Marcion's argument about Christology is analogous for Vermigli to the arguments of the 'Transubstantiators.'<sup>56</sup> Transubstantiation posits a change in the substance of the elements, but not in the form. By this the accidents of bread and wine are understood still to remain the same, but the substance related to these accidents is no longer present. In its place is the substance of Christ's body and blood.<sup>57</sup> The substance of the bread *seems* to be present when it *really* is not. The link between Marcion's Christology and the doctrine of Transubstantiation is clear. So, just as the early church condemned Marcion, Vermigli condemns the Transubstantiators. "Heretics" he writes "confess that Christ hungered, slept, showed surprise, wept and suffered; but when you infer from this that he was therefore truly man, they deny the conclusion."<sup>58</sup> Just as these Heretics deny this evident Scriptural conclusion with respect to Christology, so with respect to the sacrament Transubstantiation denies the clear conclusion, based on the fact that these properties (i.e. taste, form, etc.) cannot exist without positing their reality. Further, as there is no real comfort for the faithful if Christ was not *really* human, so there is no meaning in the eating of the sacrament if there is nothing *actually* to eat.<sup>59</sup> Vermigli's warning is clear: "Where we invent, expound and theologize without the express Word of

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<sup>55</sup> Bradley Nassif, "Marcion (d. c. 154)," in *The Dictionary of Historical Theology*, ed. Trevor A. Hart (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 351.

<sup>56</sup> OTD, 118. ['transubstantiatores' *Tractatio de Eucharistia* 63.]

<sup>57</sup> *Creeds and Confessions of Faith in the Christian Tradition*, Vol. 2, 821ff.

<sup>58</sup> OTD, 35; See also LLS, 238; ROM, B ii.

<sup>59</sup> OTD, 36.

God, we must beware lest we open a window to heretics.”<sup>60</sup> The Scriptures are Vermigli’s chief witness to the fact that the substance of the bread and wine are not changed in the Eucharist. The ongoing presence of the substance of the elements begins to show the importance of affirming the material in Vermigli’s sacramental theology. Unlike those who uphold transubstantiation, Vermigli still sees an integral place for the *substance* of the material elements in the sacrament.

The fact that the substance of the bread and wine remains, however, does not mean that Christ’s presence in the Sacrament is not *true*. To establish this reality, as is well-documented by both McLelland and Corda, Vermigli posits that Christ and the elements are united ‘sacramentally.’ Even though the elements of bread and wine are *real* bread and *real* wine, they serve the purpose of signifying the body and blood of the Lord. Yet, this signifying does not presuppose an identical or wholly different relationship between sign and signified. Rather, Vermigli posits an analogical relationship.<sup>61</sup> The signs (bread and wine) and the signified (Christ’s body and blood) are brought into relation with each other by the power of the Holy Spirit. This bringing together does not produce a static *thing*, but a *dynamic relationship*.<sup>62</sup> The dynamic relationship is between the believer and Christ through the outward symbols. Yet, it is here that the second of our patristic Christological distinctions must be interjected. According to Vermigli, the person of Christ is not eaten sacramentally simply in his divine nature in the Eucharist, but with the human nature. Corda points out that Christ took on his human nature for our salvation and his human nature is “the channel through

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<sup>60</sup> OTD, 36.

<sup>61</sup> McLelland, *Visible Words of God*, 80ff.

which God's grace is conveyed to man, the medium by which God's life-giving power is poured into man."<sup>63</sup> This fact has a definite impact on the importance Vermigli gives to the material—analogue of the human nature—in the Eucharist.

Although already present in his debate with the Transubstantiators, Vermigli's Christology on this point becomes very clear in his debate with the Lutherans. The Lutherans (or at least some of them--Vermigli admitted that Luther might not have regarded the matter so 'crassly')<sup>64</sup> believed that Christ's body was present in the Eucharist not through transubstantiation, but by what would come to be labelled 'consubstantiation.'<sup>65</sup> As with a pot of wine called 'wine' or heated iron called 'fire,' so the Lutherans, explains Vermigli, understand the "body of Christ is not present locally but only definitively, which they understand in terms of anything not circumscribed by measure of place, but said to be present because its nature or essence is appointed to that place, or at work in it."<sup>66</sup> Christ's body can be definitively at work in the Eucharist because of the Lutherans' understanding of Christology. They posit that because of the communication of attributes in the hypostatic union of the person of Christ, the human nature of Christ takes on the ubiquity of the divine nature in order to be present

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<sup>62</sup> Corda, *Veritas Sacramenti*, 135.

<sup>63</sup> Corda, *Veritas Sacramenti*, 129.

<sup>64</sup> OTD, 106; Vermigli's comments to Albert Hardenburg of Bremen reveal the same some displeasure with the Lutherans: "But the Saxons are so inflexible, I will not say anything more severe, that they endure hearing no one except one who speaks most stupidly, and they want men to swear, not so much by their own opinions, as by phrases and words. Now, as you rightly say, all these things incline towards papistry." Cited by Anderson, *Peter Martyr, Reformer in Exile*, 186.

<sup>65</sup> Sasse rightly points out that Luther never uses this term. Herman Sasse, *This is my Body: Luther's Contention for the Real Presence in the Sacrament of the Altar*, rev. ed. (Adelaide, S.A.: Lutheran Publishing House, 1977), 81.

<sup>66</sup> OTD, 107.



definitively in the Eucharist. Christ is not present locally in each transubstantiated element, but definitively in that, as Eph. 1:22-23 states, he is “the fullness of him who fills all in all.”<sup>67</sup> In this way, Christ’s presence so permeates the symbols that he is said to be ‘consubstantiate’ with them. Christ is present *really* and *corporally* with the symbols so much, so that the Lutheran can worship the symbols.<sup>68</sup>

Vermigli stands in opposition to this teaching by reason of Chalcedonian Christology. He freely admits that according to his divinity Christ is present everywhere. Yet, he quickly claims that this does not mean necessarily, then, that by reason of the communication of attributes in the hypostatic union his human nature can take on the attribute of ubiquity.<sup>69</sup> His contention is that the Councils (and Scripture) attest to the fact that Christ’s body is localized. On occasion, the Bible might speak of one nature bearing the properties of another nature, but this does not make a rule. Vermigli’s claim is that Christ is everywhere according to his divine nature, but in only one place according to his human nature: viz. heaven. Even though glorified and joined with the Word, the human nature and body of Christ retain their property of finitude.<sup>70</sup> This claim is important for “if we grant this we would not add nobility to it [the human body] but destruction, since it would then be forced from its own nature.”<sup>71</sup> In his address to the Strasbourg Senate, Vermigli fortifies his case against this Lutheran teaching: “Now it is assumed without argument that the Godhead of Christ, which is infinite and not limited

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<sup>67</sup> OTD, 110.

<sup>68</sup> Sasse, *This is my body*, 84.

<sup>69</sup> OTD, 109.

<sup>70</sup> OTD, 110.

<sup>71</sup> OTD, 110.

by causes or bounds, is everywhere. But the nature and truth of the humanity so involve circumscription, limits, and bounds that it cannot be everywhere, nor without some specific place. This follows, of course, not from any weakness of the divine power but from the permanent and unchangeable condition of human nature.”<sup>72</sup> To eat Christ, that which is sacramentally signified and which must truly be eaten in the sacrament, one needs to eat him as he is. Although Christ is, according to his divine nature, everywhere, he is, according to his human nature, only in heaven. Therefore, in order to eat Christ *truly* the sacramental union cannot be simply in the elements on earth, but lift one to heaven where Christ is. By this, Christ’s human nature, and the material elements, are jealously guarded by Vermigli.

Vermigli has guarded the continuing material substance of the bread and wine against the perceived Catholic ‘Marcionites’ and the reality of the human nature of Christ against the perceived Lutheran ‘Eutychians’, but more needs to be said about the dynamic relationship that puts the two elements together in the Eucharist. For this it seems Vermigli turns to a distinction of Augustine coming, again, from *De Doctrina Christiana*. It is here that Augustine makes the distinction of sign and signified already mentioned. Yet, Augustine also makes the distinction of *usus* and *fruitio*, use and enjoyment, which, with the distinction of sign and signified, helps the present study by explaining the dynamism of the relationship and continues to validate the material elements.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> PMR, 160.

<sup>73</sup> Hannam, “*usus-fruitio* Distinction,” 169.

Augustine argues that some things are to be used and some to be enjoyed.<sup>74</sup> There is a danger with things which are supposed to be used. If not used correctly they are abused and can lead to disaster.<sup>75</sup> The distinction for Augustine is critical: "To enjoy something is to hold fast to it in love for its own sake. To use something is to apply whatever it may be to the purpose of obtaining what you love--if indeed it is something that ought to be loved."<sup>76</sup> Yet, crucial for Augustine's argument is the idea that using the temporal order to bring us to the Trinity, the thing to be enjoyed, does not mean that the thing used has no value.<sup>77</sup> Even though we must not enjoy this dispensation with a permanent love, there is a sort of transient love for our "means of transport only because of our destination."<sup>78</sup>

Walter Hannam is chiefly concerned in his discussion of the *usus/fruitio* distinction with understanding how Augustine understood the use and love of neighbour. His claim is that Augustine does not understand use of neighbour to be purely "self-interested and instrumentive eudaimonism."<sup>79</sup> Rather, Augustine's thought on the matter "is meant to instruct his reader how one's neighbours can be most fully loved for who they truly are."<sup>80</sup> Our neighbour definitely gives us a boost in our move towards the enjoyment of God, but this does not mean that they are trampled under foot or reduced to

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<sup>74</sup> Augustine, *On Christian Teaching*, 9.

<sup>75</sup> Augustine, *On Christian Teaching*, 9.

<sup>76</sup> Augustine, *On Christian Teaching*, 9.

<sup>77</sup> Augustine, *On Christian Teaching*, 27.

<sup>78</sup> Augustine, *On Christian Teaching*, 27.

<sup>79</sup> Hannam, "*usus-fruitio* Distinction," 169.

<sup>80</sup> Hannam, "*usus-fruitio* Distinction," 170.

a mere tool. Augustine is not diminishing their place, but properly ordering it. Hannam usefully defines use and enjoyment: “what is clear is that *usus* and *fruitio* are two modes of relation. *Usus* is a relation of the subject to one reality (i.e., the *fruendum*) through another. *Fruitio*, however, is an immediate relation between the subject and its object.”<sup>81</sup> The first one is a mediated relation and the second an immediate.<sup>82</sup> Augustine never says, according to Hannam, that the first type of relationship is unnecessary. This is important for it implies that Augustine never advocated a using then discarding of the “creation, rational or irrational.”<sup>83</sup> Rather, these things (i.e. one’s neighbour) are to be continued to be loved, not on their own account, but on the account of the one to whom they lead. The relation with our neighbour “is not instrumentive as it does not leave the neighbour behind so as to enjoy an abstract, monistic God.”<sup>84</sup>

The distinctions made by Augustine and further clarified by Hannam provide very valuable material when describing Vermigli’s sacramental theology. Particularly, it provides another way to explain the relationship between the elements and Christ. In order to do this it is necessary to show exactly *what* the elements and Christ are. A misuse of the elements would be to claim that they are Christ simply and therefore are to be enjoyed. The doctrines of Transubstantiation and Consubstantiation are guilty of this error in Vermigli’s eyes. Rather than ‘using’ the elements as Christ had intended them to be used (i.e. as they truly were intended to be used), the Transubstantiators and Lutherans ‘enjoyed’ what is to be used and are necessarily, as Augustine put it, “hamstrung by [their]

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<sup>81</sup> Hannam, “*usus-fruitio* Distinction,” 170.

<sup>82</sup> Hannam, “*usus-fruitio* Distinction,” 173.

<sup>83</sup> Hannam, “*usus-fruitio* Distinction,” 171.

<sup>84</sup> Hannam, “*usus-fruitio* Distinction,” 173.

love of lower things.”<sup>85</sup> Vermigli mourns the sad fact of worship of the elements among the Transubstantiators: “I come to the idolatry that is committed in every corner of our churches. Where do you find that Christ commanded the adoration of the sacrament, enshrined in a tabernacle or carried about in procession? These things he neither commanded nor taught.”<sup>86</sup> The things which were supposed to be used for “the growth and the good of the Church have been abused.”<sup>87</sup> The Lutherans, also, stated that it was useful to worship the outward symbols. Vermigli responds “we judge that in adoration the mind should not turn to the symbols.”<sup>88</sup> Both of these groups confused the use of the sacraments by negating the materiality of the elements or the human nature of Christ, so that mere instruments which are properly to be used were now actually enjoyed for themselves.

In contrast, Vermigli claimed that in true adoration the sacramental elements are to be used and Christ is to be enjoyed. This, however, can be understood within the insights of Hannam’s explanation of Augustine. The sacramental relationship is foremost a mediated relationship. This does not, however, mean, as was discussed above, that it is theurgical, precisely because, as Fuller pointed out, the sacramental mediation happens first and foremost intelligibly.<sup>89</sup> Yet, as seen in the distinction of Augustine, the objects of mediation are validated in a way not seen by simply rejecting the theurgical aspect. In

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<sup>85</sup> Augustine, *On Christian Teaching*, 9.

<sup>86</sup> *PMR*, 40.

<sup>87</sup> *PMR*, 40.

<sup>88</sup> *OTD*, 112.

<sup>89</sup> Fuller, “Sacrifice and Sacrament,” 216.

the dynamic sacramental relation, the objects, the very materiality of the objects, is all-important for the sacrament's success. Christ deemed the elements of bread and wine useful for the sacramental relation. This meant that these objects could be used, not only for the nourishment of the body, but also the nourishment of the soul. Although the power of mediation comes directly from the Holy Spirit—again against the theurgical tradition—the Spirit uses the visible signs. The clearest example of this in Martyr's writing appears in his response to Tresham at the end of the third day of the 1549 disputation of the Eucharist where he admits that:

receiving Christ's body through faith is also possible without the sacrament. For with or without symbols, while we recall to mind Christ crucified for us and his blood shed for us, and believe it, we are truly made partakers of him; but when symbols are added which the Holy Spirit uses as instruments to better impress faith in our minds, we are greatly assisted. For we are hesitant about divine things, and therefore require outward symbols.<sup>90</sup>

From this it is clear that the elements chosen by Christ are useful and effective symbols. They are used effectively to symbolize bodily nourishment, but more, to be used in the dynamic symbolic relationship of union with Christ's body and blood in heaven.

The foundation of the sacrament is the work of the Spirit. Any effect that the sacrament might have can only be because of the movement of the Holy Spirit. No matter how good or pious the person, nothing happens in the Sacrament without the Spirit. It is for this reason that Vermigli can claim the Old Testament ceremonies had the same effect as the New Testament Sacraments—both are reliant on the same Spirit to grasp the same Messiah.<sup>91</sup> Certainly, the clarity of the movement of the Spirit was not as great in the time of the Patriarchs, but nonetheless the presence of God was grasped by the same

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<sup>90</sup> *OTD*, 246.

<sup>91</sup> *PMR*, 77.

Spirit through the same act of faith.<sup>92</sup> In this New Testament era the ceremonies and symbols used by God to display his presence have been greatly diminished, but the Spirit, who in paradise will work without mediating symbols altogether, has always been he who brings the presence of God.<sup>93</sup>

It is true that Vermigli thinks God can work on our souls without the mediation of outward instruments, but, writes Vermigli, "For the most part and in the usual way he uses the external word and the Sacraments so that the elect may be powerfully moved to attain heavenly goods."<sup>94</sup> Such powerful moving is not properly the cause of the external word or Sacraments alone, but only insofar as they are 'instrumental causes.'<sup>95</sup> God has chosen to increase faith by these outward elements and therefore they actually increase what they have intended to increase as instruments.<sup>96</sup> Again, Vermigli is explicit here; these instruments would accomplish nothing were it not for the concomitant work of the Spirit in the heart of the believer.<sup>97</sup> In conjunction with the Spirit, then, the believer should not shun the external instruments of God. Responding to Pantachus, Orothetes says:

Regardless, you should not pass by with a deaf ear when statements in Scripture attribute a certain efficacy regarding heavenly matters to these instruments. It is asserted that faith comes from hearing, but hearing comes from the word of God.

<sup>92</sup> *PMR*, 78.

<sup>93</sup> *PMR*, 77.

<sup>94</sup> *DIAL*, 190. Also: "Sacraments are not such necessary means that God has tied his power to them completely as though he could not give their salvation without them." *EW*, 107.

<sup>95</sup> *DIAL*, 190.

<sup>96</sup> "Sacraments are not the cause of grace, but the means which God uses while he sanctifies his own through them." *EW*, 107.

<sup>97</sup> *DIAL*, 190.

Paul dares to assert that he gave rebirth to the Corinthians through the Gospel. But this happens so that we do not shun the external instruments of God. For they certainly should not be held in low esteem since God has deigned to use them for our salvation.<sup>98</sup>

Certainly in Vermigli's opinion, the sacraments are no *mere* or superfluous symbols that are optional for the believer.<sup>99</sup>

An important element in this sacramental relationship is faith. Even though the Holy Spirit is the power behind the actual sacramental change, he makes this change by way of the believer's faith. The Holy Spirit operates through faith to lift the believer up from things temporal to things eternal and heavenly—*sursum corda*.<sup>100</sup> Again, Augustine's distinction is useful. The sacramental things are not *automatically* used *ex opere operato*, but can be misused: in order to use them the participant must be using them *by faith*.<sup>101</sup> The ungodly, on the other hand, cannot use them rightly because of their lack of faith. Concluding statements five and six from Vermigli's *Epitome of the Book against Gardiner* sum these points up nicely:

5. In the faithful receiving of the Eucharist we are through faith joined to the body and blood of Christ, not only in soul or mind; we become partakers of the Spirit, grace, and virtue of the Lord. This is not done by the power of the work but through the goodness and sure promise of him to whom we offer faithful assent while communicating.

6. The ungodly do not eat and drink the very flesh and blood of Christ, except insofar as they use outward signs. I mean bread and wine which in their own way are, and are called the body and blood of Christ.<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> *DIAL*, 190.

<sup>99</sup> "Just as sacraments cannot be neglected without the severest fault, even so are they received with the greatest benefit." *EW*, 107

<sup>100</sup> McLelland, *Visible Words of God*, 85.

<sup>101</sup> Lillback makes this idea in Vermigli clear: "While rejecting the Roman Church's *ex opera operato* conception of sacramental grace, Martyr still avers that the sacraments are an authentic means of grace." Lillback, "The Early Reformed Covenant Paradigm," 84

<sup>102</sup> *PMR*, 159.



For Vermigli there is a twofold eating in the Eucharist: the spiritual or internal eating and the external eating. These must be in conjunction with each other for a true eating to occur. The spiritual eating in the sacrament cannot occur without an external eating, but the merely external can occur, as is seen in the quote immediately above, without the spiritual. When eaten wholly externally, Vermigli characterizes it as a carnal eating which leads to condemnation. When there is a harmonious relation, on the other hand, Vermigli posits true communion: "The internal and external eating...are not only analogous, but they also help each other. More specifically, while the internal gives to the external eating a purpose, a goal, and end, the external eating furnishes a means, a way by which the internal eating can occur."<sup>103</sup> The external eating and the material elements are thus validated when they are used in their proper context of faith's apprehension of the signified.

The discussion of Vermigli's doctrine of the Eucharist in relation to the material comes into clearest focus in the striking passage on the adoration of the elements in the *Treatise on the Eucharist*.<sup>104</sup> The power and respect Vermigli gives to the elements of the Eucharist is particularly evident in this discussion. Although certainly not typical of Reformed theologians of his time, Vermigli is willing to allow the reverencing of the Eucharistic elements if the worshippers are properly educated as to their instrumental power of mediation.<sup>105</sup> He writes: "I consider it profitable to abstain from outward

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<sup>103</sup> Corda, *Veritas Sacramenti*, 156.

<sup>104</sup> OTD, 87.

<sup>105</sup> Vermigli is certainly engaging in this discussion because of his work on the 1549 *Book of Common Prayer*. See Diarmaid MacCulloch, "Peter Martyr and Thomas Cranmer," in *Vermigli: Humanism Republicanism, Reformation*, 173-202.

adoration, namely prostration or kneeling, until they can be instructed. Inward worship may be used without risk, nor would the outward be evil in itself. For many kneel and worship devoutly when they hear those words of the Gospel, 'And the word became flesh,' yet the words themselves are not said to be worshipped, but rather their signification."<sup>106</sup>

For all that is said against the Catholics and Lutherans, Vermigli posits that it is possible to engage in bending of the knee before the elements. Yet, how can this be? Most clearly, Vermigli here is consistent with his argument that the adoration of the mind should not turn to the mere symbols; rather, following Augustine, the adoration of the mind should nonetheless pass through the use of the symbols to the enjoyment of the divine object itself: "But just as Augustine warned us not to settle on the flesh but to go on to the godhead, so here concerning worship I advise us when receiving the Eucharist not to stick with the symbols but in spirit and truth to adore Christ sitting in heaven at the Father's right hand."<sup>107</sup> This may seem to relegate the symbols to being used as instruments to be discarded, but it is clear that they are actually validated. Although Vermigli cautions against this outward worship for fear that the simpler folk will not understand *use* but see *idolatry*, he does say that outward worship is not evil in itself if understood correctly.<sup>108</sup> Further, he quickly makes a distinction between the use the bread and wine can have and the use icons are pretended to have. The use of the bread and wine are validated by Christ's command, but icons are clearly denied the right to be

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<sup>106</sup> OTD, 87.

<sup>107</sup> OTD, 87.

<sup>108</sup> OTD, 87.

useful for they lead to idolatry.<sup>109</sup> He does not allow for veneration of any other material object, simply because no other material object was commanded to be useful for mediation by God.<sup>110</sup>

Clearly Vermigli's Eucharistic doctrine owes much to several key early church doctrines. The Transubstantiators adopt a docetic Marcionism which denies the reality and substance of the bread and wine. The Lutherans deny the full reality Christ's human nature in their assertion of ubiquity and 'consubstantiation.' For Vermigli it is only through careful application of Augustine's distinction between use and enjoyment that a proper understanding of the Eucharist can finally be achieved. This understanding is one which properly orders and validates the material elements in the Eucharist. Further, through the dynamic power of the Holy Spirit and the instrumentality of faith, the sacramental union can be possible and the worshipper can properly bend the knee before and be united with the King of Kings.

Augustine's *usus-fruitio* distinction is also seen in comparing Vermigli with one of his closest theological rivals, Huldreich Zwingli. Although he notes that Zwingli probably "thought not so lightly of the sacraments," Vermigli nonetheless criticizes his view. At least one reason for their divergence is a difference in their respective understandings of Augustine's doctrine of instrumentality. Vermigli follows more strictly the doctrine of the two modes of relation found in Augustine's writings. The effect is that Vermigli ascribes more power to the properly used instrumental signs in the Eucharist through which the believer has access to enjoyment of the glorified Christ.

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<sup>109</sup> OTD, 87.

<sup>110</sup> OTD, 87.

Vermigli makes this clear in his treatment of Zwingli's thought in the *Oxford Treatise*.<sup>111</sup> The first step to understand Vermigli's argument is to note that he is in agreement with Zwingli on the question of the distinction between the two natures of Christ (and at this point, at least, over against the Lutherans). Although by his divine nature Christ is 'all in all', by virtue of his human nature, and therefore his person, he is locally only in Heaven. Yet, against Zwingli, Vermigli says that in order for any nourishment to come from the Supper, the faithful must nonetheless feed on Christ's person.<sup>112</sup> To feed on Christ's person, the hearts of worshippers must be lifted up to where Christ is. In order to lift up our hearts to where Christ is an effective instrument is needed. This is precisely the role of the elements of the Eucharist. Their usefulness is not only in reminding believers of Christ's death and resurrection, but in truly joining them to the substance of Christ. Indeed, the point of the Eucharist is for the believer to become a partaker more and more of the body and blood of Christ—and also for the attributes of Christ to become more and more part of the believer.<sup>113</sup> For, as Vermigli writes, "he is eaten spiritually, and is truly joined to us."<sup>114</sup> The sacramental elements are effective means of spiritual union. Eating Christ wholly is important for it is not only the believer's soul that is saved, but also the body. Further, eating Christ in his glorified state is important for the believer wants to put on more and more the resurrected and immortal body.

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<sup>111</sup> *OTD*, 118ff.

<sup>112</sup> *OTD*, 120 and 121.

<sup>113</sup> *OTD*, 123.

<sup>114</sup> *OTD*, 120.

Vermigli is in agreement with Zwingli that this eating is not carnal, again over against the Lutherans, but is against Zwingli in that the eating does have something to do with the outward elements of the sacrament. In the conclusion to his treatise Vermigli writes:

Then again, they [the Zwinglians] have not always recognized the power belonging to it [the sacrament]. For these are no ordinary signs, but such as may move the mind powerfully and effectively. They will say that this attributes too much to elements of this world. We answer that it is not attributed to them for their own sake, but on account of the institution of the Lord, the power of the Holy Spirit, and the clarity of the words.<sup>115</sup>

Vermigli avoids setting up a radical distinction between the Spirit and the instruments. As with the divine and human natures in Christology, or the spirit and the letter in scriptural hermeneutics, so also the Spirit and the sacramental instruments should not be confused for God has chosen to work with these instruments to effectuate his promises. They are distinct, but not separate, in accord with Chalcedonian logic. Continuing in his conclusion Vermigli writes: “[It is] not that the Word makes us believe, for the Spirit is he through whom we believe; but he uses the instrument of words and also sacraments, which are sensible words of God.”<sup>116</sup>

### III. Conclusion

A survey of Vermigli’s understanding of the Eucharist—most specifically the theological context in which he could allow its adoration—provides yet another avenue to see his cautious validation of the outward element of divine grace. In this instance we see that Vermigli guards the outward element of the signs of bread and wine against what

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<sup>115</sup> OTD, 123.

<sup>116</sup> OTD, 124. See McLelland, *Visible Words of God*, 77.

he would call the 'crass materialism' of transubstantiation and 'consubstantiation' and the over-spiritualization of the same by Zwingli and the Sacramentarians. Vermigli here strove for a golden Chalcedonian mean by which he protected the sign and substance of the sacrament in one whole. The sacrament was not complete without the one or the other, and could indeed lead to disastrous consequences if wrongly conceived.

## Chapter VI

### The 'mean' mystery: Vermigli and Union with Christ

#### I. Introduction

The central goal of Vermigli's Christianity is union with Christ. Such union, however, must not be misunderstood: Vermigli wished it neither to be viewed as an over-carnalized deification, nor as an over-spiritualized casting off of the body. A right understanding of Vermigli's concept of the role of the outward elements of divine grace leads directly to a full appreciation of his doctrine of union with Christ. Conversely, also, a right understanding of Vermigli's doctrine of union with Christ will lead back to smooth sailing between an over-carnalized and over-spiritualized soteriology. As McLelland memorably writes in connection with Martyr's sacramental teaching, the "only sure lodestar for this difficult path is Martyr's teaching on the threefold union with Christ."<sup>1</sup> The believer's union with Christ is not just of nature or of similarity, but also a middle, mysterious union.

#### II. Vermigli on the Mystical Union

Certainly Martyr eschews any idea of merit for salvation. He is fundamentally against the notion that the Christian could of himself stand righteous before God. As such, he stands with the other magisterial reformers in accepting Luther's understanding of justification by faith alone.<sup>2</sup> Although he would undergo modification in certain

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<sup>1</sup> McLelland, *Visible Words of God*, 147; this 'threefold union' is explained below.

<sup>2</sup> I.e. *LLS*, 239; *ROM*, 72r.

terminology throughout his career, he nevertheless made the critical distinction of justification from any sanctifying work of the Christian.<sup>3</sup> This is not to say, however, that the Christian life is therefore separated from the declaration of justification.<sup>4</sup> While Martyr indeed made a clear distinction between the forensic declaration of justice and the habitual process of sanctification, he always closely linked the two. Both are based on the work of the Spirit and the utter inability of man to merit salvation. Indeed, the two modes of righteousness are the main aspects of Martyr's doctrine of union with Christ.<sup>5</sup>

In both modes the external instruments of grace figure prominently for Vermigli. Christ's human nature, the audible words of Scripture and the visible words of the sacraments are the necessary instruments of this spiritual union. Actually, when speaking about this union, Martyr falls back into very familiar terminology. The union is not simply to be understood crudely as one body merging with another—such is an over-statement of the process of union. This over-statement is characteristic of a theurgic deification and, for Vermigli, has nothing to do with biblical Christianity. On the other hand, such union is by no means simply symbolic. Vermigli's reading of scripture sees a true union which, although difficult to describe, is nonetheless essential for the believer.

We find several expressions of this idea of union scattered throughout the writings of Vermigli. A few examples will suffice to sum up his position.

#### **A. Public Orations**

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<sup>3</sup> James, "*De justificatione*," ii and 356; See Alister McGrath, *Iustitia Dei: A History of the Christian Doctrine of Justification*, Vol. II, From 1500 to the Present Day (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 2.

<sup>4</sup> James, "*De justificatione*," 185.

<sup>5</sup> *CP*, I.17ff.



In several public orations Vermigli makes his doctrine of union with Christ very plain. On one such occasion he makes the clear link, following 1 Corinthians 15 presumably, between Christ's resurrection and the believer's. Interestingly, however, he states that such resurrection does not simply await the believer after death, but can already be participated in this life. The Christian's true 'commonwealth' is fully in heaven, but the believer already participates the resurrection in part: "We must now examine in what this resurrection of ours consists. First, it consists in good works which are nothing except the beginnings and first steps of eternal life. They are the stairs up which God draws us to a perfect life—not merits but a journey and first steps. We are debtors so that we live not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit."<sup>6</sup> Although the Christian has not attained perfect resurrection, she is nonetheless engaged in it by steps and degrees.<sup>7</sup>

## **B. Commentary on Romans**

More general comments on union with Christ come naturally in Vermigli's comments on Paul's Epistle to the Romans.<sup>8</sup> Although Vermigli is careful to analyze the Greek text of Romans, he also speaks more generally of theological issues in the *scholia*. Critique of the errors of unreformed Catholic doctrine are abundant, but positive theological exposition is by no means absent.<sup>9</sup> Vermigli is critical of all religion which

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<sup>6</sup> *LLS*, 227.

<sup>7</sup> *LLS*, 227; See *CP* I.125.

<sup>8</sup> James, "*De Justificatione*," 337ff.

<sup>9</sup> Critique of papal religion is a predominant theme in the Roman's commentary. For example: *ROM* 36v, 46r, 46v, 47v, 52v, 56r, 57r, etc.

would seek to merit or sell the grace of Christ—any religion which would promise union with Christ without the proper means and instruments.<sup>10</sup> Against such religion, Vermigli cites Paul who promises Christ by faith without the works of the law. Such works Vermigli links to the meritorious works of contemporary Tridentine theology and, farther back, to an implicit Pelagianism.<sup>11</sup> Vermigli argues that a gracious union with Christ comes only by faith in his death and resurrection as testified in Scripture. Such faith, which Vermigli characterizes as assent to Scripture,<sup>12</sup> is a gift of God and brings about the fruits of regeneration and truly good works.<sup>13</sup> By this the Christian becomes bound to Christ—a binding that is made real by faith and the Holy Spirit. Spiritual here, as with the sacraments, does not mean artificial or purely symbolic, but actually in a very real sense more essential than some purely carnal union.<sup>14</sup>

On a closely related point, Vermigli wished to distance himself from a doctrine of essential righteousness as found in the teachings of Andreas Osiander.<sup>15</sup> Osiander, a German Lutheran theologian and reformer, talked of an infusion of Christ's divine nature into the Christian at justification.<sup>16</sup> As such, justification was no longer strictly forensic, but involved the divine entering the human. Vermigli rejects Osiander's teaching based on Romans 4. In this chapter he reads that Paul argues for justification by faith. Such

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<sup>10</sup> ROM, 11v.

<sup>11</sup> ROM, 250.

<sup>12</sup> ROM, 92v.

<sup>13</sup> ROM, 60r.

<sup>14</sup> ROM, 83r ff.

<sup>15</sup> Anderson, *Peter Martyr, a reformer in exile*, 191; Strehle, *Catholic Roots*, 73-79.

<sup>16</sup> LLS, 153 n.176.

justification does not come from any sort of infusion of grace, but only the imputation of Christ's righteousness to the sinner.<sup>17</sup>

### C. Letters to Calvin and Beza

Most interesting for our study are two letters, largely similar, that Vermigli wrote to Calvin and Beza in 1555.<sup>18</sup> In these letters Martyr talks of a 'middle union' which is a great mystery of the faith. Basing his comments on Hebrews 2:14, Vermigli says that the believer shares the same nature as Christ.<sup>19</sup> This takes place in the exchange of Christ's new nature for the old human nature. This process of exchange happens throughout the life of a Christian. Writes Vermigli: "Because of these heavenly gifts which we have acquired by believing, we begin while living here to have that nature developed and we will have it more restored day by day and finally perfected when we reach the blessed resurrection."<sup>20</sup> This development does not take place in the soul of the Christian only, but in the whole person.<sup>21</sup>

Vermigli continues with an amazing observation: the union we have with Christ is not simply that we both share a human nature or that we are similar to Christ in a certain spiritual way; rather union is a *mean* between these two by way of a 'hidden mystery.'<sup>22</sup>

<sup>17</sup> *LLS*, 153.

<sup>18</sup> *LLS*, 135ff. and *CP*, Appendix 96ff.

<sup>19</sup> *LLS*, 135 / *CP*, Appendix 96.

<sup>20</sup> *LLS*, 136.

<sup>21</sup> *CP*, Appendix 96. See Don Fuller's comments on the importance of the 'whole person' in Vermigli's theology. Fuller, "Sacrifice and Sacrament," 232.

<sup>22</sup> *LLS*, 136.

Such mystical union is very real: "By it we are joined to Christ as to a head, and we are flesh of his flesh and bones of his bones since all of us insofar as we have faith are given life in him, are increased, and are joined together with all the other members."<sup>23</sup> Yet this increase and joining is not a crass mingling of substances or blood between the believer and Christ, but a mingling based on faith.<sup>24</sup> It is a mingling which, following a New Testament image resembles the mystical mingling of husband and wife.<sup>25</sup> It is a communion of head and members. Even as in a body the head and members are joined together yet distinct, so in Christ's mystical body the believer, as member, is joined to Christ, as head, while remaining nonetheless distinct.<sup>26</sup>

The believer is 'engrafted' into Christ by the work of the Holy Spirit and through faith. None of the union happens outside of the Spirit or faith.<sup>27</sup> Indeed, this is the way in which the believer overcomes the distance between Christ and herself. Christ, physically, is sitting at the right hand of God the Father. Thus for the believer to be present in Christ, the Holy Spirit must lift her up in spirit to be mystically joined to Christ's person.<sup>28</sup> For Vermigli the two natures Christology of Chalcedon is foundational to this formulation of the doctrine of union with Christ. The believer's whole person must be joined to the whole person of Christ.

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<sup>23</sup> *LLS*, 136.

<sup>24</sup> *LLS*, 137.

<sup>25</sup> Eph. 5:22-33.

<sup>26</sup> *CP*, Appendix 96.

<sup>27</sup> *CP*, Appendix 96.

<sup>28</sup> *CP*, Appendix 96.

In a critically important remark Vermigli now describes the process of joining. It is sufficient, he says, that the believer is “knit unto him by certaine spirituall knots and ioynthes.”<sup>29</sup> These ‘spirituall knots and ioynthes’ are none other than faith, the word of God and the sacraments.<sup>30</sup> It is by these, in a very interesting Elizabethan turn of phrase, that “the spirit flowing from our head, wandereth up and downe in the Church, and by a iust proportion quickeneth and maketh his members like in iust proportion.”<sup>31</sup> The sacraments and word of God are always, then, to be tokens or signs of this true mystical communion with Christ in the body of his Church. Vermigli is careful not to make them absolutely necessary; faith is the most important aspect, yet the sacraments are nonetheless the principal means of this spiritual union with Christ.<sup>32</sup>

It is interesting that Vermigli wrote these letters to the two leading French Reformers. It is clear that he wanted to present a position which would be pleasing to them. Some of his terminology is slightly different (e.g. the ‘middle union’), yet largely he succeeded in this. Calvin’s theology of union with Christ reflects closely Vermigli’s.<sup>33</sup> Calvin, for example, also clearly argued for a spiritual yet true union with Christ.<sup>34</sup> Calvin puts emphasis on the Holy Spirit as the bond which unites the believer to

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<sup>29</sup> CP, Appendix 97.

<sup>30</sup> CP, Appendix 97.

<sup>31</sup> CP, Appendix 97.

<sup>32</sup> CP, Appendix 97; See LLS, 243; DIAL, 189.

<sup>33</sup> James, “*De Justificatione*,” 338.

<sup>34</sup> See Dennis Tamburello, *Union with Christ: John Calvin and the Mysticism of St. Bernard* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 1994), 84ff.; Kevin Dixon Kennedy, *Union with Christ and the Extent of the Atonement in Calvin* (New York: Peter Lang, 2002), 119.

Christ.<sup>35</sup> No other bond can effectually unite the believer to Christ so as to receive cleansing from sin. Calvin is adamant on the necessity of the Spirit:

This union alone ensures that, as far as we are concerned, he has not unprofitably come with the name of Savior. The same purpose is served by that sacred wedlock through which we are made flesh of his flesh and bone of his bone, and thus one with him. But he unites himself to us by the Spirit alone. By the grace and power of the same Spirit we are made his members, to keep us under himself and in turn to possess him.<sup>36</sup>

Such possession comes through faith and has as object true knowledge of the real Christ.<sup>37</sup> In all, then, Calvin's language is very close to that of Vermigli. The importance of the spiritual bond between the believer and Christ is fundamental.

The 'mystical union' between the believer and Christ is fundamentally important for Calvin. As with Vermigli, Calvin was concerned not to confuse his doctrine of union with Christ with that of Osiander.<sup>38</sup> He clearly defines this union:

Therefore, that joining together of Head and members, that indwelling of Christ in our hearts—in short, that mystical union—are accorded by us the highest degree of importance, so that Christ, having been made ours, makes us sharers with him in the gifts with which he has been endowed. We do not, therefore, contemplate him outside of ourselves from afar in order that his righteousness may be imputed to us but because we put on Christ and are engrafted into his body—in short, we glory that we have fellowship of righteousness with him.<sup>39</sup>

Calvin's understanding of fellowship is again not a 'gross mingling' of Christ with the believer (as has Osiander, he argues), but nonetheless a true and mystical union.

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<sup>35</sup> John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1960), III.i.1.

<sup>36</sup> Calvin, *Institutes*, III.i.4.

<sup>37</sup> Calvin, *Institutes*, III.ii.2.

<sup>38</sup> Kennedy, *Union with Christ*, 120-21.

<sup>39</sup> Calvin, *Institutes*, III.xi.10.

Calvin finds a perfect parallel for a poor understanding of the mystical union in a wrong understanding of the presence of Christ in the Lord's Supper. As one wishes a physical eating of the Lord's Supper, so one wishes a physical mingling of persons in the union of Christ in the believer.<sup>40</sup> Against this, Calvin clearly argues for a *spiritual* reception (true but by the Spirit) of the Eucharist and so clearly argues for a *spiritual* union of the believer with Christ (again, true but by the Spirit). His understanding is not 'Zwinglian' on union (i.e. that it is merely symbolic), but that it is true.<sup>41</sup> In fact, he bristles at the comment by Osiander that all who do not accept the 'essential righteousness' doctrine are in fact 'Zwinglian'.<sup>42</sup>

### III. Good Works and the Middle Way

In his 1980 monograph Steven Ozment questioned Calvin on the charge of 're-catholicizing' Christianity after Luther.<sup>43</sup> Such charge could also be levelled against Vermigli. Luther's theology, says Ozment, resolved the pilgrim status of the medieval Christian by giving them certitude of their salvation by faith. Such doctrine was liberating at first, but created an unexpected problem for earnest believers. Earnest believers were still human and humans valued their lives by what they did. Ironically,

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<sup>40</sup> Calvin, *Institutes*, III.xi.10.

<sup>41</sup> Calvin, *Institutes*, III.xi.10. Tamburello's comments on Calvin are helpful here: "What, then, is the nature of mystical union? Calvin does at times speak of our having a share in the 'substance' of Christ...However, Calvin is referring here to what happens in the power of the Holy Spirit, not to a crass mixture of substances, which elsewhere he rejects in the most emphatic terms...Indeed, Calvin is tireless in his stress on the Holy Spirit as the bond of a spiritual (yet absolutely real) union with Christ." Tamburello, *Union with Christ*, 87.

<sup>42</sup> Calvin, *Institutes*, III.xi.10.

<sup>43</sup> Steven Ozment, *The Age of Reform 1250-1550: An Intellectual and Religious History of Late Medieval and Reformation Europe* (New Haven: Yale, 1980), 374.

writes Ozment, "from the point of view of secular experience, making salvation dependent in part on good works proved less presumptuous of human ability than the complete disassociation of salvation from such works proposed by Luther."<sup>44</sup> For some it was more of a burden to do nothing than to do something.<sup>45</sup>

Hence, writes Ozment, Calvin compromised in saying that believers' good works were presumptive evidence that one is among the elect.<sup>46</sup> Calvin certainly did not reintroduce any sort of late-medieval merit theology into the Reformation, but it might as well have been this. Ozment charges: "Calvin's teaching, like his conduct of the Genevan church, once again made good works and moral behavior the center of religious life and reintroduced religious anxiety over them. In Calvinism the presence or absence of good works came to be taken as a commentary on one's eternal destiny."<sup>47</sup> As such, Calvinists were constantly worried about outward moral works and their election by God.<sup>48</sup>

Vermigli is in the same group of Reformed theologians which could be criticised here by Ozment. Vermigli shared with Calvin a particular understanding of the process of sanctification. The outward was indeed an important factor in determining the inward. He explicitly states that outward good works are the fruits and effects of election.<sup>49</sup> As such spirits, for example, can watch humans from afar and know which are probably elect

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<sup>44</sup> Ozment, *The Age of Reform*, 375.

<sup>45</sup> See Strehle, *Catholic Roots*, 3-4.

<sup>46</sup> Ozment, *The Age of Reform*, 379.

<sup>47</sup> Ozment, *The Age of Reform*, 379.

<sup>48</sup> Ozment, *The Age of Reform*, 380.

<sup>49</sup> *CP*, I.82.



and which are not. Spirits cannot descend into the mind of the person, only God can, but yet they can gather the causes of things by their effects.<sup>50</sup>

Even more, Vermigli could be chided for his additions of Scripture and the sacraments to a list of the instruments of union with Christ. Yet, perhaps all this misses the point. Certainly Vermigli, as Calvin, clearly distinguished the declaration of justification and the working out of justification. Such declaration had nothing to do with good works. But Vermigli, and undoubtedly Calvin, was not simply trying to be faithful to Luther, but to Scripture. Vermigli was not a simple follower of the other great reformers. Rather he was an eclectic and independent thinker and one of the 'ecumenical' reformers.<sup>51</sup> His theology sought to steer the middle course by taking what was good and rejecting what was bad in human thought so as to boldly proclaim divine revelation. This at least according to his own words.

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<sup>50</sup> CP, I.82.

<sup>51</sup> Corda, *Veritas Sacramenti*, 190.

## Conclusion

Peter Martyr Vermigli was a consistent thinker. Theological insights were not packaged separately from each other, but consistently linked together. Further, such insights were not simply borrowed from other thinkers, but thoroughly digested and clearly explicated. He was indebted to no one theologian or school, but was willing to take insights from any source which could help explain and understand biblical revelation. Rather than being pulled to an extreme position which over-emphasized either the material or the spiritual which he perceived was typical of certain theologians or schools of thought to which he was exposed, he sought to steer the middle course which took what was good and rejected what was bad.

Typical of this tendency to steer the middle course are his insights into the outward instruments of God's salvation. According to Vermigli such instruments—the human nature of Christ, the audible words of Scripture and the visible words of the Sacraments—should not be over-carnalized, nor over-spiritualized. Although God could work immediately (i.e. without instruments), he has chosen to work through these instruments for salvation. Hence, the inward spiritual power and the outward instrument must not be divorced from each other. The Spirit of God, thinks Vermigli, does not normally work without the outward instrument, nor can the outward instrument effect grace without the Spirit's power.

Modern scholarship has done much to define the sources of Vermigli's thought, but more needs to be said. The more Vermigli is studied, the more it is necessary to qualify characterizations of him. He is not a thinker who is easily pigeon-holed into a certain theological school or movement. As a well-educated biblical and humanistic

scholar, Vermigli took independent and well-reasoned positions on the whole variety of theological questions current in his day. He was no deductive or rationalistic thinker with a sort of 'central dogma', but yet he took care to be precise in his language and coherent in his thought.

Even though living in a time when most did not travel a great deal, Vermigli had a very international presence. In his education, his ecclesiastical appointments and his writings, he had personal contact with a surprising range of Catholic, Protestant and Radical theologians across Europe. As such, he had a well-formulated perception of the extremes at work within the theology of his time. He consistently tried to sail between what he considered to be extremes of an over-carnalization and an over-spiritualization of the outward instruments of divine grace. He even warned his fellow magisterial reformers not to think too crassly nor too lightly of the outward elements.

Vermigli's thoughts on the subject are most clearly seen in his exposition of Christology, scriptural hermeneutics, and a theology of the sacraments. The integrity of the human nature of Christ, based on his understanding of the Chalcedonian logic, must always be guarded. Such guarding is not simply a question of words, but concerned the very possibility of salvation. Without a true human nature with its properties guarded, thinks Vermigli, it is impossible to have a true mediation. It is not a light thing to distort Christ's human nature, but one which will have ramifications on the rest of theology and, indeed, the salvation of the human being.

Guarding the written word is equally important for Vermigli for it too is an 'instrument' given by God to be used for salvation. If too much or too little is said about the Word, then the person will be shipwrecked in their religion. Such is an insight gained

from Vermigli's frequent reference of Augustine's sign theory of *De doctrina christiana*. Scripture reveals God's will, but only if used correctly. Correct using of Scripture requires foundational principles of interpretation. Vermigli's life work was to interpret Scripture; hence, he had many opportunities to speak of overt methodological principles. In all he consistently argues to steer the middle course.

Vermigli's most intense and recurring public battles were those on the Eucharist. As with the *incarnate* Word and the *audible* words, so with the *visible* words Vermigli is careful not to say too much or too little. Helpful in this regard are his comments surrounding the bending of the knee before the Host. Vermigli cautions against it generally for most Christians are not well enough informed. Although not necessary, if a Christian does steer the middle-course, she could bend the knee. Vermigli thinks such a middle course would not make the host into an 'idol,' but would use it as a proper instrument to enjoy the living Christ.

Comments on Christology, Scripture and the Sacraments find their ultimate mystical and practical significance for Vermigli in his comments on union with Christ. Indeed, all these outward instruments are given by God for the sake of progression towards this mystical union. Yet, this union itself should not be understood in some over-carnalized or over-spiritualized sense. It is clearly true, says Vermigli, but in a mystical and spiritual sense.

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