

See Through the Chatter: Joseph C. McLelland's Legacy¹

Maurice Boutin, *McGill University*

Abstract: Peter Martyr Vermigli's *Oxford Treatise and Disputation on the Eucharist*, a formal explication of the sacrament of the Eucharist (by Martyr) and a debate on the Eucharist that took place between Martyr and three Catholic theologians in 1549, are fraught by rhetoric concerning the doctrine of transubstantiation as "entirely alien to the phraseology of holy Scriptures." One finds a great deal of chatter in *the Oxford Treatise* and the *Disputation* about "holding to the scriptures and deferring to all who speak and will speak to them." And yet it can be shown that Vermigli is quite selective about what it means to proceed from the Scriptures. He relies, for instance, on Chalcedonian Christology to dismiss what he considers to be the condemnatory innovation of transubstantiation. He also relies on categorizations pertaining to anthropology that contradict his hermeneutical principle. Moreover, these categorizations reflect views as St. Thomas Aquinas's to curtail a common enemy: Docetism (with respect to the Eucharist). Incidentally, and ironically, Aquinas relies on biblical passages Vermigli himself does not consider, which indicate that a new concept of the Messiah was then emerging. *Scriptura sola solum Scriptura numquam est*. In sum, Vermigli authorizes his own system of words, extraneous to holy Scripture, unnecessarily at cross-purposes with some of his disputants. As an editor of *The Peter Martyr Library*, Joseph C. McLelland, advises, to see what we are truly looking at, we need to see through to that which is deeper still. This paper is offered with that aim in view: to see through Vermigli's chatter.

Keywords: Philosophy of religion; hermeneutics; eucharistic theology; Peter Martyr Vermigli.

In his *Dedication to Thomas Cranmer*, Peter Martyr Vermigli² summarizes the "controversy regarding the presence of Christ in the Eucharist"³ in the following terms: apart from the statement "that this sacrament of the holy Supper is nothing without use," "the other point is that when we make use of it we grasp Christ's body and blood by faith alone."⁴ Here, philosophical reflection pertains to central aspects of Christian faith with regard to the possibilities offered by what has been called the metaphysics of presence, or, more precisely, the interplay of the notions of substance and accidents on the one hand, and

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2. Peter Martyr Vermigli (Sept. 8, 1499 in Florence – Nov. 12, 1562), an important leader in the Reformation Movement, was named after Peter of Verona, an obscure medieval Italian saint and martyr. Professor McLelland's interest in Peter Martyr Vermigli goes back to the early 1950s – in 1953 he earned a PhD in Historical Theology from the University of Edinburgh, Scotland, (under the direction of Thomas F. Torrance), with a dissertation entitled *The Sacramental Theology of Peter Martyr Vermigli*, and in 1976 he founded – with J.P. Donnelly, a Jesuit from Marquette University – the Peter Martyr Library. In this paper I refer to Vermigli's *Oxford Treatise and Disputation on the Eucharist, 1549*, trans. and ed. with an introduction and notes by Joseph C. McLelland for the series "Sixteenth Century Essays & Studies," vol. 56 (Kirksville, MO: Truman State University Press, 2000). Hereafter, pages xv–xlvi refer to the *Preface* (xv) and *Introduction* (xvi–xlvi), T 1–125 refers to *Treatise on the Sacrament of the Eucharist*, and D 127–292 refers to *A Disputation on the Sacrament of the Eucharist*.

3. *Oxford Treatise and Disputation*, T 16–17.

4. *Oxford Treatise and Disputation*, T 17.

the relation between natures and person on the other. The goal is each time the same, namely, to serve the living memory – not just the psychological remembrance – of God, and to secure the reality of God’s presence.

Here, as ever, philosophical reflection does not ensure a renewal by all means; it only highlights the importance of what is at play, and it prevents religion from falling back into that which seems to be obvious, for instance the mode of presence or absence of religion in allegedly pure language, i.e., a language that would mean nothing and thus would allow for an objectifying distance making possible meaningless discourses about meaningful discourses. According to the French semiotician Algirdas Julien Greimas (1917–1992), this is exactly what logicians dream of and wish for.⁵ The philosophy of religion helps us understand why speaking is frightening, because enough is never being said even though that which is said is always too much – as Qohelet warns, “God is in heaven and you upon earth; therefore, let your words be few” (Ecclesiastes 5:1).

“Correlation” is a term used by Vermigli in the *Disputation* of 1549 – see, for instance, D 145: “[...] because of the correlation the sacrament has with Christ, in whom both humanity and divinity remain whole, the substance of bread in the sacrament does not go away.” To know why one says “correlation” is to know why one no longer wishes to say “essence,” “form,” “ensemble,” “construction,” “structure,” “idea,” or “system.” The philosophy of religion not only helps us understand why such words showed themselves to be insufficient, but also why the notion of correlation continues to borrow implicit significance from them and be haunted by them. The question to be examined here is the following: why does the correlation work perfectly between the Eucharist and Christ, whereas *both* the notion of transubstantiation *and also* Chalcedonian Christology are not provided by Scripture?

I

In *The Oxford Treatise and Disputation on the Eucharist* there cannot be enough pejorative qualifications for transubstantiation, the core issue of the controversy. Apart from being just an “opinion”⁶ – and a “recent”⁷ one at that – “the notion of transubstantiation”⁸ is but a “fiction,”⁹ the product of an “absurd device,”¹⁰ of “fancied devices” and “delusions”¹¹; it is a “permanent illusion”¹² filled with arguments that are not seldom “frivolous”¹³ and at times even “absurd.”¹⁴ It is an “error,”¹⁵ the expression

5. As he states in the opening paragraph of *Du sens: Essais sémiotiques* (Paris: Seuil, 1970), “Il est extrêmement difficile de parler du sens et d’en dire quelque chose de sensé. Pour le faire convenablement, l’unique moyen serait de se construire un langage qui ne signifie rien: on établirait ainsi une distance objectivante permettant de tenir des discours dépourvus de sens sur des discours sensés. C’est là justement le rêve et le vœu des logiciens” (7). See also Paul J. Perron’s *Introduction* to the English translation of *Du sens (On Meaning: Selected Writings in Semiotic Theory)*, trans. Paul J. Perron and Frank H. Collins [Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1987], xxiv.

6. *Oxford Treatise and Disputation*, T 23; 24; 98; 100; 106.

7. *Oxford Treatise and Disputation*, T 23; 97.

8. *Oxford Treatise and Disputation*, T 20.

9. *Oxford Treatise and Disputation*, T 44; 76.

10. *Oxford Treatise and Disputation*, T 75.

11. *Oxford Treatise and Disputation*, T 15.

12. *Oxford Treatise and Disputation*, T 39; 105.

13. *Oxford Treatise and Disputation*, T 75.

14. *Oxford Treatise and Disputation*, T 37; 39; 91; 96; 118.

15. *Oxford Treatise and Disputation*, T 20; 100.

of “superstitions”¹⁶ and “idolatries.”¹⁷ “[T]he dogma of transubstantiation”¹⁸ gives rise to the “false and senseless dogma [...] that after the sacrament is received another sacrament remains,”¹⁹ which runs counter to the fact that there is no sacrament apart from the use of the sacrament – *nullum sacramentum nisi usum*.²⁰ As Vermigli writes at the end of the *Treatise*:

I have observed so far that the Eucharist (with which we are dealing) has been so overwhelmed, buried, and deformed by lies, devices, and superstitions that it could be reckoned anything besides what the Lord instituted in the Supper. To prevent its being easily purged, the devil (the greatest enemy of all peace and truth) has sown so many opinions, controversies, disagreements, heresies, and battles, although without blood, that scarcely any consent worthy of Christians can be hoped for by human reason. Alas! We have not endured these things without harm, for we have dealt double injury to this sacrament: in part because we have erected an accursed idol instead of the excellent and special gift of Christ; in part because we have abused these holy mysteries, without sincere faith, with conscience defiled by grave sins, scorning a proper examination of our own hearts.

I pray that God will pity such a great calamity, and will deign to restore to his church at last a Eucharist renewed and enjoying its proper use; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen*.²¹

In the record of the discussions during the four days of the *Disputation* (May 28, 29, 31, and June 1, 1549), pejorative qualifications like those in the *Treatise* are used less often regarding aspects of transubstantiation, although Vermigli still alludes to “absurdity,”²² “superstition,”²³ “idolatry,”²⁴ or “delusion,”²⁵ and talks of a perversion of “the nature of things” and of “insolence”²⁶ in the readiness – as the Royal Legates to the disputation put it – “to lie about anything” out of “ignorance through overconfidence.”²⁷

However, what might be typical in a disputation on the Eucharist should not be generalized and applied to Vermigli’s commentaries on the Bible, as does the founder of biblical criticism, Richard Simon (1638–1712), in *Histoire critique du Vieux Testament*.²⁸ “[...] Peter Martyr’s commentaries on the Bible are full of long digressions, and everywhere he is wary of being viewed as an erudite man.”²⁹ The many

16 *Oxford Treatise and Disputation*, T 16; 20; 92; 101; 106; 125.

17. *Oxford Treatise and Disputation*, T 16; 86; 101; 125.

18. *Oxford Treatise and Disputation*, T 91.

19. *Oxford Treatise and Disputation*, T 44.

20. *Oxford Treatise and Disputation*, T 44; 87.

21. *Oxford Treatise and Disputation*, T 125.

22. *Oxford Treatise and Disputation*, D 151; 221.

23. *Oxford Treatise and Disputation*, D 209.

24. *Oxford Treatise and Disputation*, D 136.

25. *Oxford Treatise and Disputation*, D 250.

26. *Oxford Treatise and Disputation*, D 251.

27. *Oxford Treatise and Disputation*, D 130.

28. Paris, 1678 (repr. Amsterdam: Elzevir, 1680, 3 vol). The volumes are organized as follows: vol. 1 : *Du Texte Hebreu de la Bible depuis Moïse jusqu’à nostre temps*; vol. 2 : *Où il est traité des principales Versions de la Bible*; vol. 3 : *Où il est traité de la maniere de bien Traduire la Bible et où l’on montre en mesme temps combien l’Ecriture est obscure; l’on y a aussi joint la Critique des meilleurs Auteurs, tant Juifs que Chrestiens qui ont escrit sur la Bible*.

29. “Pierre Martyr Florentin qui fut appelé en Angleterre au commencement de la reforme sous Eduârd VI. et qui enseigna l’Ecriture Sainte dans les Ecoles de Zuric, a aussi fait plusieurs Commentaires sur les Livres Historiques de la Bible, lesquels ne peuvent pas estre d’une grande utilité pour entendre le sens litteral, parce qu’ils sont remplis de lieux communs, et de Questions qu’il forme souvent à l’occasion des paroles de son Texte. Il y a de l’apparence que comme il estoit éloquent il suivit cette methode pour faire paroître davantage son éloquence et mesme son érudition ; au-lieu que s’il se fût attaché tout-à-fait à son Texte, il n’eût pas eu la liberté de tant parler, ni de resoudre tant de Questions curieuses qu’il a formées dans ses Commentaires, ausquelles il ajoute aussi des invectives. [...] En un mot les Commentaires de Pierre Martyr sur la Bible sont pleins de longues digressions, et il affecte partout de paroître homme d’érudition.” (Simon, *Histoire critique du Vieux Testament*, vol. 3, 491–2).

references to the Fathers and to Councils during the disputation are explained as follows by Vermigli at the beginning of the third day:

I have cited them as you have heard, and perhaps lingered too much in that line, not that I depend on them, but because I see many addicted to them in a superstitious way, who are forever crying: the Fathers, the Fathers! Thinking they are always against us. I wished to show such people that they make most of all for us. What I have said regarding the Fathers you may consider as the answer about Councils.³⁰

As to the many repetitions in the *Treatise*, in which, as Vermigli says, “it often happens [...] that the same thing is repeated two or three times,” he adds:

This upsets those who are wise and learned, who without prodding see many things for themselves, and consider it superfluous to have everything set forth for them, unwillingly suffering the repetition of the same matter. Yet we should remember that although this is a bore to the learned, at times repetition and double treatment are not without profit. For in this unhappy time, the notion of transubstantiation and the bodily presence of Christ in the Eucharist has lodged so deeply in men’s minds, and is taken so seriously by them and held so dear, that they are greatly disturbed, and their minds distracted from hearing our arguments and truth to believe otherwise. Just as one or two calls are not enough to awaken those who are fast asleep, so to state the fact once is not sufficient to recall these men from their former error. Therefore I shall think a great deal is accomplished if I do much with this superstitious sort of folk by repeating the same thing.³¹

The repetitions in the *Disputation* document are less Vermigli’s alleged propensity for digressions and erudite pedantry (Simon’s words) than the stubbornness³² of “his three opponents, who kept returning to their arguments for transubstantiation and were reluctant to let Martyr proceed to the matter of real presence.”³³

II

It is not a question for us here to set ourselves up as “arbiters” and decide whether “victory in a most just cause [is] to be assigned to Peter or to Tresham, Chedsey, and Morgan.”³⁴ Instead, we should inquire into what Vermigli means when he says: “we hold to the holy Scriptures, and defer to all who speak and will speak according to them.”³⁵ As he says,

[...] the *criterion* or principle of theological subjects, by which we judge sacred letters, is twofold, namely by the Holy Spirit and by the Scriptures; one is inward and the other outward. Because we deal at present with the outward, I say that nothing other than Scripture should be used. I lay the foundation in it, and in it I chiefly rest. Truly I will not reject the Fathers; on the contrary, I attribute a great deal to them *when they speak according to the Scriptures*.³⁶

Right at the beginning of the *Disputation*, Vermigli recalls the similarity in the structure of his argument against transubstantiation with the structure of Chalcedonian Christology. After quoting from

30. *Oxford Treatise and Disputation*, D 209.

31. *Oxford Treatise and Disputation*, T 20.

32. See, for example: *Oxford Treatise and Disputation*, D 151–2; 159; 220–1; 281–84.

33. *Oxford Treatise and Disputation*, xxxiv.

34. *Oxford Treatise and Disputation*, D 130. See also D 289 and xli.

35. *Oxford Treatise and Disputation*, D 209.

36. *Oxford Treatise and Disputation*, D 209 (last emphasis mine). See also D 142–3, and 156–158.

Augustine (354–430) cited in Gratian’s decree *De consecratione*, Vermigli says: “Here you see the same comparison between the Eucharist and Christ: it follows that just as the two natures remain whole in Christ, so the substance of the bread must not be removed in the Eucharist.”³⁷ “For the Fathers [...] on both sides, in Christ as in the sacrament [the Eucharist], the two natures remain whole and perfect”³⁸ (D 145). And “because of the correlation the sacrament has with Christ, in whom both humanity and divinity remain whole, the substance of bread in the sacrament does not go away,” but “two ‘substances’ exist in the Eucharist”³⁹; “[...] as bread remains whole in the sacrament and does not depart from its nature, so in Christ the body remained, and was not changed into the divine nature, as heretics claim.”⁴⁰ “[I]n Christ the human and divine natures truly remain, in such a way that one does not pass into the other.”⁴¹

Oftentimes Vermigli refers to the fact that Scripture does not provide any basis for the notion of transubstantiation based on the distinction between substance and accidents.⁴² For him, this is not the way one has to understand the “*mutatio*” taking place in the Eucharist.⁴³ Yet curiously enough, he seems to accept and rely on the understanding of Christ put forward by the Council of Chalcedon in 451 in terms of the two-natures doctrine, that is, Christ as human and divine, united but not confused, unchanging, inseparable and yet distinct.⁴⁴ At least in the *Treatise* and in the *Disputation* Vermigli does not raise the question to what extent these distinctions are, as it were, “according to the Scriptures;” he raises that question only with regard to transubstantiation and the Eucharist, not with reference to Chalcedonian Christology he shares with his “opponents.” It seems that Vermigli – contrary to the proverb he quotes – does not “turn every stone” in order “to get at the truth, especially in establishing sacred doctrine.”⁴⁵

Why does Vermigli treat transubstantiation and Chalcedonian Christology differently with regard to Scripture? Why is it not “convenient” to argue with reference to “substance” and “accidents,” since they are “foreign words, entirely alien to the phraseology of holy Scripture,”⁴⁶ whereas it seems quite in order to argue with reference to “natures” and “person” and still be, as it were, “scripturally correct”? How is it that the latter is adequate to Scripture, while the former cannot be “understood from Scripture”?⁴⁷ Why does the “correlation”⁴⁸ or “*convenientia*”⁴⁹ work perfectly between the Eucharist and Christ, whereas *both* the notion of transubstantiation *and also* Chalcedonian Christology are not provided by the “phraseology of Scripture”?

An answer to the last question is not given by Vermigli’s remark about union with Christ and the fact that “his flesh is both given and received to be eaten and drunk”: “[...] proper speech cannot easily be found for these things – words signify this or that as they are appointed to serve human ends. Therefore when it comes to heavenly and divine things, the natural man who does not understand such great secrets cannot as much as name them.”⁵⁰

37. *Oxford Treatise and Disputation*, D 144.

38. *Oxford Treatise and Disputation*, D 145.

39. *Oxford Treatise and Disputation*, xxiv.

40. *Oxford Treatise and Disputation*, D 146.

41. *Oxford Treatise and Disputation*, T 39. See also T 62; 77; 89; 91; 95; 96; 109; 117; 118; D 142; 143; 250; 257.

42. *Oxford Treatise and Disputation*, T 30; 31; 32; 36; 41; 44; 72; 74; D 142; 154; 158; 250–1.

43. *Oxford Treatise and Disputation*, T 39; 56; 57; 77; 94; 99; 104; D 149–50; 154.

44. Ἀσυγχύτως, ἀτρέπτως, ἀδιαρέτως, ἀχωρίστως – inconfuse, immutabiliter, indivise, inseparabiliter.

45. *Oxford Treatise and Disputation*, T 59.

46. *Oxford Treatise and Disputation*, T 18.

47. *Oxford Treatise and Disputation*, T 74.

48. *Oxford Treatise and Disputation*, D 145.

49. *Oxford Treatise and Disputation*, xxiv n. 25.

50. *Oxford Treatise and Disputation*, T 15. On “naming,” see also: T 56 to 59; 73; 77; 94; D 145; 159; 218.

The correlation of Chalcedonian Christology and Scripture is not discussed by Vermigli, at least in the *Treatise* or the *Disputation*. Is it because it is older than transubstantiation as defined by the fourth Lateran Council in 1215? This decision from 1215 was meant to resolve the debate on the presence of Christ in the Eucharist that had been occurring since the ninth century in Corbie.⁵¹ The debate was revived in the eleventh century by Berengar of Tours (ca. 1000–1088) and his condemnation (1050). Vermigli alludes to his evaluation of Berengar’s time when he refers to Theophylact of Ochryda (ca. 1050–1108) “who happened to live in that time when many questions about transubstantiation began to be raised, under Nicholas, bishop of Rome, in the time of Lanfranc and Berengar.”⁵² “Not a man of much judgment,”⁵³ Vermigli says, Theophylact “seems to have lived in an unfortunate age.”⁵⁴ For Vermigli, “Augustine lived in ‘purer’ times, while from Theophylact onwards it is evident that ‘Later Fathers speak less prudently.’”⁵⁵ This is also Calvin’s (1509–1564) opinion, at least with regard to transubstantiation, which “was unknown to those better ages when the purer doctrine of religion still flourished,”⁵⁶ and even in the time of Bernard of Clairvaux (1091–1153).⁵⁷ Moreover, Vermigli does not hesitate to “oppose” Origen (185–254), “a most ancient Father and of great renown,” to John of Damascus (ca. 670–750), “a recent and not illustrious writer”⁵⁸ who “lived under Leo Isauricus, emperor of Greece,” hence “almost one hundred and twenty years” after Gregory the Great,⁵⁹ and was “inclined toward many half-truths and superstitions.”⁶⁰

Does that mean that Vermigli idealizes not only the earliest times of Christian faith as documented by Scripture, but also the early centuries of Christianity, for instance the time of Chalcedon, over against more recent times – for instance the eleventh century and the time of the fourth Lateran Council? Although he knows that in the fifth century things were not always completely harmonious,⁶¹ speaking of the time of Pope Gelasius (492–96), he says, “the Roman pontificate was not so defiled and corrupt, nor had it become such a tyranny as fell on it later, that the authority of Gelasius is to be faulted.”⁶² For people “of later”⁶³ or “more recent”⁶⁴ time – like Anselm (1033–1109), Hugh (ca. 1096–1141) and Richard of St. Victor (died in 1173) – “since the dogma of transubstantiation had been forced on their age, these men served the time by their writings, and their new invention should not prejudice the opinion of the most ancient church and the teaching of the oldest Fathers,”⁶⁵ “as if we should heed what the pope with his cardinals decreed at Constance⁶⁶ or in the synod where Berengar was condemned, instead of what the ancient church preached and believed.”⁶⁷

All these considerations about “ancient” and “recent,” “old” and “new,” should not be viewed as the proper explanation for Vermigli’s position against transubstantiation. Rather, the following must be

51. *Oxford Treatise and Disputation*, T 28 n. 32.

52. *Oxford Treatise and Disputation*, T 90.

53. *Oxford Treatise and Disputation*, T 90.

54. *Oxford Treatise and Disputation*, D 215.

55. *Oxford Treatise and Disputation*, T 76 n. 232.

56. Quoted in *Oxford Treatise and Disputation*, T 76 n. 232.

57. *Oxford Treatise and Disputation*, T 98 n. 297.

58. *Oxford Treatise and Disputation*, T 91.

59. *Oxford Treatise and Disputation*, T 91.

60. *Oxford Treatise and Disputation*, T 92.

61. *Oxford Treatise and Disputation*, T 55; D 146–7.

62. *Oxford Treatise and Disputation*, D 143.

63. *Oxford Treatise and Disputation*, T 27.

64. *Oxford Treatise and Disputation*, T 91.

65. *Oxford Treatise and Disputation*, T 91.

66. See *Oxford Treatise and Disputation*, T 97.

67. *Oxford Treatise and Disputation*, T 55.

recalled: the human nature of Christ – this is not just “accidents”! Human nature does not need to be understood that way in order to secure the real presence of God in Jesus Christ. Likewise, the “nature and substance”⁶⁸ of bread⁶⁹ does not need to “go away”⁷⁰ or be “cast away”⁷¹ in order to make room for the substance of Christ and thus ensure the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist. Otherwise, transubstantiation could only be viewed as a continuation – or a revival – of docetism; for to contend that through transubstantiation “it seems to be bread, but is not” amounts to saying that “Christ’s flesh and body [...] was not true flesh, but only an appearance.”⁷² Apart from the fact that transubstantiation is nowhere to be found in Scripture, it does show that the “transubstantiators”⁷³ – as Vermigli calls his “adversaries”⁷⁴ – are not consequent,⁷⁵ and that they even jeopardize Chalcedonian Christology.

This is why Chalcedonian Christology is so badly needed by Vermigli – so much so that he does not question its adequacy when the time comes to “proceed from the Scriptures.”⁷⁶ Actually, such questioning could only have weakened his argument against transubstantiation.

III

Vermigli’s rejection of transubstantiation in the Eucharist has not only a Christological basis, but also an anthropological one. Union with Christ in the “reception by faith”⁷⁷ of the Eucharist does not imply that we lose our nature as humans and that “any transubstantiation of our bodies” takes place.⁷⁸ “[S]ince transubstantiation is not required in our case, much less is it for symbols.”⁷⁹ “If it is true that we are not transubstantiated, although still so closely joined to Christ, what need is there for bread to be transubstantiated in order to be made Christ’s body?”⁸⁰

For Vermigli, if senses witness⁸¹ and reason confirms,⁸² faith grasps⁸³ and confesses.⁸⁴ For him, we adhere “more firmly to what we believe than do the senses or reason to what they comprehend by its natural power”⁸⁵; and “what we comprehend by faith must not be considered false or feigned, counterfeit or a phantom,”⁸⁶ since “faith cannot grasp things that are false or spurious.”⁸⁷ The close connection between senses and faith is the proper structure of a sacrament like the Eucharist,⁸⁸ and Vermigli likes the idea that

68. *Oxford Treatise and Disputation*, T 39; D 218.

69. See also *Oxford Treatise and Disputation*, T 72; 94; D 146; 151; 257; 259.

70. *Oxford Treatise and Disputation*, D 143.

71. *Oxford Treatise and Disputation*, D 284.

72. *Oxford Treatise and Disputation*, T 35; see also D 257–8.

73. *Oxford Treatise and Disputation*, T 94; 95; 99; 111; 112; 118.

74. *Oxford Treatise and Disputation*, T 16; 18; 19; 44; 100; 104.

75. E.g., *Oxford Treatise and Disputation*, T 91.

76. *Oxford Treatise and Disputation*, D 209.

77. *Oxford Treatise and Disputation*, T 82; D 229.

78. *Oxford Treatise and Disputation*, T 84.

79. *Oxford Treatise and Disputation*, T 90; D 149–50; 250.

80. *Oxford Treatise and Disputation*, T 82; also T 89 and D 230–1.

81. *Oxford Treatise and Disputation*, T 10; 17; 19.

82. *Oxford Treatise and Disputation*, T 12; 19.

83. *Oxford Treatise and Disputation*, T 10; 17.

84. *Oxford Treatise and Disputation*, T 109; D 281.

85. *Oxford Treatise and Disputation*, T 17.

86. *Oxford Treatise and Disputation*, T 18.

87. *Oxford Treatise and Disputation*, T 19.

88. *Oxford Treatise and Disputation*, T 70; 80; 83; 84; 93; 104; D 218; 219; 228.

grace does not destroy nature,⁸⁹ but is “added” or “joined” to nature.⁹⁰ The complex relation between senses and faith has been examined by Thomas Aquinas (1224/5–1274). In question seventy-three to eighty-three of the third part of *Summa Theologiae*, eighty-four articles pertain to various aspects of the Eucharist. Article seven from question seventy-six on *How the Body of Christ Exists in that Sacrament* deals with the question *Whether the Body of Christ as it Is in this Sacrament Can Be Seen by Some Eye at Least Glorified*.⁹¹ As usual in the *Summa*, the structure of the article reflects the organization of a disputation regarding a commonly agreed issue whose discussion is consummated by the president of the debate. Cons are referred to at the beginning of the article, and the answers to the objections follow the “*corpus*” beginning with the words: “*Respondeo. Dicendum quod,*” which corresponds to the concluding remarks by the president of the debate.

Quite seldom in the *Summa* an article might reflect first only various sides of affirmative positions and yet keep the structure of a disputation; then the “*sed contra*” might bring to the fore the negative side. Article seven referred to here is a case in point: the “*sed contra*” stipulates that nothing which exists in the same way can be seen simultaneously in various ways. The glorified eye always sees Christ as he is in his proper way, therefore it does not see Christ as he is in this sacrament. The “*corpus*” of article seven and the sections following it bring about a threefold way of seeing:

- (1) **corporeal seeing** – “*oculus corporeus*” (ad primum & ad 3um) also called “*oculus corporalis*” (ad 2um, & also “*corpus*,” with the addition: “*proprie dictus*”);
- (2) **intellectual/spiritual seeing** – “*oculus intellectualis*” (“*corpus*” & ad 3um) also called “*oculus spiritualis*” (“*corpus*”) with reference to “*intellect*” (“*corpus*” & ad 2um);
- (3) **seeing by faith** – “*oculus fidei*” (see “*corpus*”).

For Thomas Aquinas seeing by faith must be privileged if the “condition” of “*homo viator*” – i.e., of “pilgrimage” here on earth – is to prevail (“*corpus*”). Vermigli’s preference also goes to seeing by faith. He says for instance: “[...] when we make use of [the Holy Supper] we grasp Christ’s body and blood by faith alone.”⁹²

Although the New Testament does not provide any information on a Christology based on the two-natures notion – like Chalcedonian Christology – some indications concerning possible approaches to Christology are given at the beginning of the first letter of John and are also alluded to in the passages referring to Peter’s confession in the synoptic gospels (Mk 8:27–30, Mt 16:13–20, and Lk 9:18–21). These passages – at least Mk 8:27–30 – do not mean a turning point in the whole activity of Jesus – let alone in his consciousness, nor in the development of his understanding by the disciples; they are rather indications that from now on various teachings pertaining to a new concept of the Messiah are beginning to emerge.

Not so much Christ “*per se*” but rather Christ “*pro nobis*” is expressed, and the question “Who is Jesus?” calls for various answers based on particular perceptions: for mental/intellectual perception, Jesus is John the Baptist, Elijah, or any other prophet, or he is the representative of most noble ideas like love and justice; for faith perception, Jesus is the revelation of God in a real, although paradoxical identity, whereas for sense/historical perception, Jesus is a man from Nazareth, one man among many others, nothing more and nothing less. The same faith perception is also expressed in 1 Cor 8:6: “But for us there is only one

89. E.g., *Oxford Treatise and Disputation*, T 94.

90. *Oxford Treatise and Disputation*, T 56; 57; 59; 93; D 145.

91. *Utrum corpus Christi prout est in hoc sacramento possit videri ab aliquo oculo saltem glorificato*.

92. *Oxford Treatise and Disputation*, T 17; see also xxiv.

God and one Lord”; the background for that confession of faith is mentioned in verse 5, in which Paul states as a matter of fact: “There are many gods and many lords.” The beginning of the first letter of John refers to those who have heard, seen with their own eyes and touched with their own hands the Word of life. Who are they? The verbs used do characterize sense perception, not mental/intellectual perception. And yet, in this particular case, sense perception as such is not meant, since sense perception was possible even for the contemporaries of Jesus who did not believe in him and consequently did not proclaim him as the Word of life. Seeing by faith is meant, which – related to sense perception – perceives in Jesus the manifestation of God’s life. Johannine Christology is based on a seeing that is neither just sense perception nor just mental or intellectual perception; it is seeing by faith.⁹³

Neither the *Treatise* nor the *Disputation* on the Eucharist refer to Johannine Christology or to Peter’s confession, for instance in Mk 8:27–30, which indicates that various teachings with regard to a new concept of the Messiah are beginning to emerge. Both the *Treatise* and the *Disputation* focus rather – for instance – on John 6:35 quite particularly, and discuss at length and repeatedly the meaning of the statement: “I am the bread of life.”

IV

On the first day of the disputation Peter Martyr Vermigli sets the stage for the discussion by saying:

So mindless and foolish are the people that if someone teaches differently about the sacrament than has been received in the past, they think Christ is taken away from them. When we teach something else about the Eucharist than is manufactured and believed in the Papacy, they run together in a mob and cry with the silversmiths [a reference to Acts 19:28,34]: ‘Great is Diana of the Ephesians.’⁹⁴

Both Vermigli’s *Treatise* and the *Disputation on the Sacrament of the Eucharist* of 1549 show that Scripture alone is never just Scripture – *Scriptura sola solum Scriptura numquam est*. This statement was not manufactured in the Papacy; it is rather a product of the *development* of the *formgeschichtliche Methode*, of biblical form criticism.

The *Disputation* shows that above and beyond the concept – although not without it – there is the event, and that there is no self-closure of religious knowledge. This is what the correlation of the Eucharist with Christ means: not the emphasis on the pure power of connection (*nexus*) along with the inflation of conjunctions (and – and, and even: etc.) and interdependency – these are all ways *par excellence* to miss the proper *kairos* of this correlation. More precisely, if presence and representation are inseparable, and if the latter – representation – entails the constant possibility of putting presence in jeopardy, then the correlation of the Eucharist with Christ means that we are condemned – as it were – to creativity, namely to inquire into what remains to be done when nothing more can be said. This is both the necessary and impossible task of religious thought. Creative people are those who prevent from sinking into noxious routine. Even the absence of creativity has itself to be imagined toward a new intimacy with that which is nearest.

There is a poiesis of research and critique which is basic for philosophy of religion and for Joseph Cumming McLelland’s legacy as a philosopher of religion as well. It consists in unveiling possibly new objects for reflection and for practice. Chatter should give way to thought. A newborn idea always bleaches

93. See appendix below.

94. *Oxford Treatise and Disputation*, D 136.

somewhat when it finds its way within language, which is why one should not take the path to insight casually. The latter might well be the source of the kind of irony to which McLelland devoted himself with the earnestness and the equanimity proper to spiritual exercise. Irony, he said, “comes from ambiguity” and is called for by “the disproportion of our rationality, the humor of it all.”⁹⁵ Why is it so? Because, McLelland suggested, “there is much that does not meet the eye, something more for which clarity is inadequate.”⁹⁶ Invited in 1967 by the Princeton journal *Theology Today* to address the issue of “Religion in Canada: A Study in Polarities” with regard to both Canada’s Centenary and the International Exhibition at Montreal better known as Expo 67, McLelland begins by saying: “Canada is a geographer’s dream and a politician’s nightmare.”⁹⁷

What does that mean for the philosophy of religion today? McLelland recalled in 1969 that “it took decades before astronomers could begin to ‘see’ the planet Uranus, because their accepted paradigm could admit only star or comet. They were not truly seeing what they were looking at.” And he asked: “Is it a similar case with our God-models? If so, then we need self-critical experimentation, in the cubist style, until we learn to see through the pictures to that which is deeper still.”⁹⁸ According to Michel Foucault,

It is in vain that we say what we see; what we see never resides in what we say. And it is in vain that we attempt to show, by the use of images, metaphors, or similes, what we are saying; the space where they achieve their splendour is not that deployed by our eyes but that defined by the sequential elements of syntax. [...] the profound invisibility of what one sees is inseparable from the invisibility of the person seeing [...].⁹⁹

The past cannot be revived without being experienced along with issues made out of both shadow and light, thus casting away the false clarity of a bygone past illusorily objectified in order to facilitate the acceptance of its so-called effects.

95. Joseph C. McLelland, “Zeus Unbound: The Irony of Theism,” *Toronto Journal of theology* 7 (1991): 232.

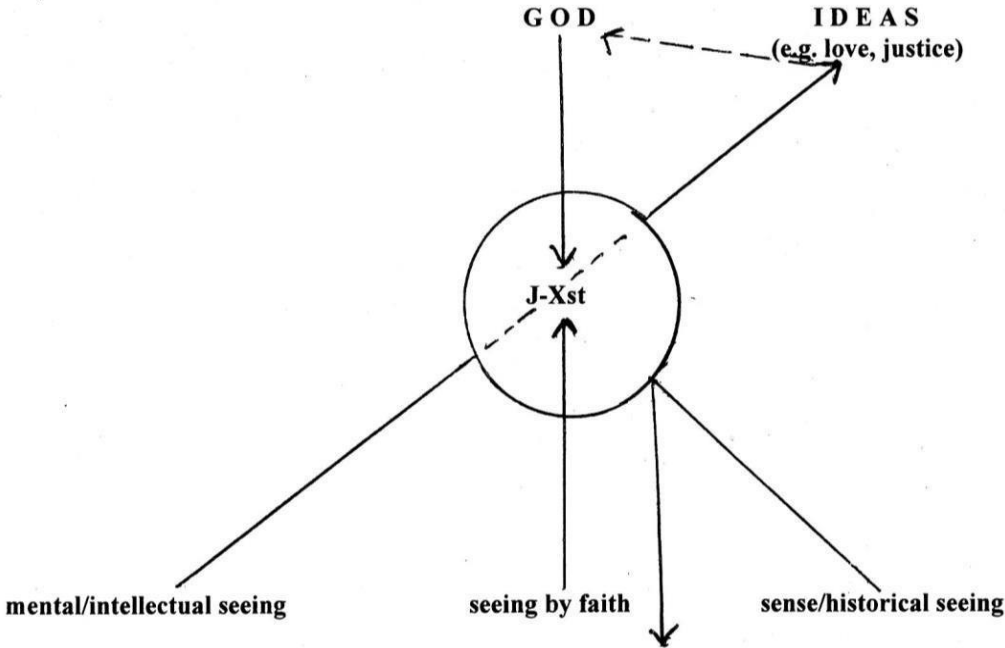
96. McLelland, “Zeus Unbound,” 231.

97. McLelland, “Religion in Canada: A Study in Polarities,” *Theology Today* 24 (1967): 295.

98. McLelland, “Ideas of God as Analogue Models,” 1969 (unpublished).

99. Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (London: Routledge, 2002), 10; 17. Originally published as: *Les mots et les choses: Une archéologie des sciences humaines* (Paris: Gallimard, 1966).

APPENDIX



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