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ROMANIAN REFORMATION RESEARCH

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The Centre for Reformation Studies within Emanuel University of Oradea. The Centre for Reformation Studies was founded in 1996 as a research department within Emanuel University of Oradea. Its primary objective is to present the theology and history of the Protestant Reformation of the sixteenth century to the Romania people in their native tongue for the enlargement of God's kingdom and to the benefit of Romanian Christianity.

The theological ideas of the Reformation were introduced in Romanian lands shortly after Luther's initiation of reform in Germany. The German and Hungarian communities in Transylvania embraced the Lutheran and Reformed understandings of Christian theology. Because both communities had been established within the realm of Eastern Christianity, Reformation theology tended to be restricted to their own churches. Thus, in Transylvania and, to a lesser degree in the whole of Romania, the existence of Reformation ideas is thoroughly conditioned by ethnic boundaries. The Romanian majority shares the theology of Eastern Orthodoxy, while the Germans are Lutheran, and the Hungarians are Reformed. Ethnic boundaries have discouraged the establishment of Romanian Lutheran or Reformed churches. The linguistic barrier also hindered Reformation theology from entering Romanian Orthodox communities. The preference of Lutheran Germans and Reformed Hungarians to speak their native tongues made the reception of Protestant theology by Romanian speakers almost impossible.

The situation has remained unchanged until now. Within this particular religious context, the work of the Centre for Reformation Studies becomes relevant as we intend to present all aspects of the Reformation to Romanians in the Romanian language. The Centre is not occupied solely with theology, but also includes the history, politics, economics, philosophy and sociology of the Reformation.

The Centre for Reformation Studies has five main research concerns:

1. Translation of primary sources. We plan to translate the most important works of the main Reformers because few of their writings have ever been available in Romanian.
2. Translation of relevant contemporary studies. We have already published two books in Romanian: Timothy George's *Theology of the Reformers* and James Montgomery Boice's *Foundations of Christian Faith*.
3. The establishment of solid research in view of the development of the Centre for Reformation Studies into a department which shall confer MTh, MPhil and DPhil diplomas in historical theology.
4. Publication of research articles. Emanuel University of Oradea publishes *Perichoresis*, the theological journal of the Faculty of Theology. The Centre for Reformation Studies will periodically publish an entire issue on the Reformation (or anything else connected to the Reformation, including the theology of the Middle Ages), with the support of contributors from abroad and from Romania.
5. The establishment of a Reformation Library to include both primary sources and secondary material. Books on the Reformation are almost totally lacking in Romania; thus the Centre for Reformation Studies is very interested in the acquisition of any books on the Reformation (the works of the Reformers and any other book on Protestant theology, history, etc.).
6. The presentation of Reformation theology to Romanian pastors and ministers. We intend to organize conferences so that Romanian pastors and ministers regain a fresh approach to their Protestant roots.

The Centre for Reformation Studies welcomes any suggestion and support. Submission of articles and reviews for the periodical issue on Reformation Studies hosted by *Perichoresis* are most welcome. For more information, please write to:

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PETER MARTYR IN BUCER'S STRASBOURG: THE EARLY FORMULATION OF HIS DOCTRINE OF JUSTIFICATION

Frank A. James III

Introduction

Fleeing the Roman Inquisition in late summer of 1542, Peter Martyr Vermigli journeyed over the Alps to Protestantism and an uncertain future. Shortly after his arrival in Strasbourg, Martin Bucer wrote to Calvin on 28 October, 1542: "A man has arrived from Italy who is quite learned in Latin, Greek, and Hebrew and well-skilled in the Scriptures; he is about forty-four years old, of serious demeanor and keen intelligence. His name is Peter Martyr."¹ The learned Italian was no theological novice when he arrived in Strasbourg,² but a mature theologian with considerable ecclesiastical experience.³ Even while in Italy, he had the audacity "to teach and teach publicly, that man is justified by faith in the person and finished work of Jesus."⁴ Indeed, it was "the linchpin of his Gospel, *"quel benedetto articolo della giustificatione"* (that blessed article of justification)."⁵ Justification was a fundamental principle of the Italian reform movement among the Valdesians and those in close association with Contarini. The key question we will consider is to what degree was Vermigli's first expression of doctrine of

¹ *Ioannis Calvinii Opera quae supersunt omnia* (CO), ed. C. Baum, E. Cunitz and E. Reiss (Brunswick/Berlin: Schwetschke, 1863-1900), 11: 450: "Advenit ex Italia vir quidam graece, hebraice, et latine admodum doctus, et in scripturis feliciter versatus, annos quadraginta quattuor, gravis moribus et iudicio acri, Petro Martyri nomen est."

² Vermigli arrived in Strasbourg shortly before the end of October 1542. Bucer's letter to Calvin on 28 October 1542 indicates that Vermigli had just arrived. *Calvini opera*, 39: 450.

³ Klaus Sturm, *Die Theologie Peter Martyr Vermiglis während seines ersten Aufenthalts in Strassburg 1542-1547* (Neukirchen: Neukirchener Verlag, 1971), 39: "Als Martyr in der zweiten Hälfte des Oktober 1542 in Strassburg anlangte, war er gerade dreiundvierzig Jahre alt geworden. Im Dienst seiner Kirche hatte er bereits beachtliche Erfahrungen gewonnen und verantwortungsvolle und ehrenhafte Ämter innegehabt. Er war kein Neuling mehr in der Theologie."

⁴ McNair, *Peter Martyr in Italy: An Anatomy of Apostasy* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967), 229.

⁵ McNair, *Peter Martyr in Italy*, 226.

justification dependent on his Italian theological formation.

Virtually all the research of the last twenty-five years, despite differences of interpretation, have reached unanimity on one question, namely, that Vermigli's theology was fundamentally formed before he apostatized from Italy. He had already acquired a Protestant doctrine of the Eucharist.⁶ Indeed, Simler informs us that he celebrated the Lord's Supper in a Protestant manner in Pisa during his flight from Italy.⁷ His view of the authority of Scripture paralleled the Protestant doctrine of *sola scriptura*,⁸ and Augustine had long served as his theological guiding light in understanding those Scriptures.⁹ Moreover, as I have argued elsewhere, his doctrine of double predestination was well formed before his flight from Italy.¹⁰ There has been also a general consensus that, ever since Naples, he had embraced a Protestant-inspired doctrine of justification by faith alone.¹¹ Even Klaus Sturm sees in Vermigli's early doctrine of justification some Protestant distinctives.¹² It seems clear that Vermigli had abandoned not only his homeland but also Roman theology. The true nature of his theological convictions became visible in the clear light of Strasbourg.

⁶ Scholars concur that Vermigli had absorbed Protestant eucharistic doctrine before leaving Italy. Joseph C. McLelland, *The Visible Words of God: An Exposition of the Sacramental Theology of Peter Martyr Vermigli A. D. 1500-1562* (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1957), 271, writes: "the 1544 Catechism alone proves that Martyr left Italy with a consistently Reformed doctrine of the sacraments." See also McNair, *Peter Martyr in Italy*, 153, and Salvatore Corda, *Veritas Sacramenti: A Study in Vermigli's Doctrine of the Lord's Supper*, Zürcher Beiträge zur Reformationsgeschichte 6 (Zurich: Theologischer Verlag Zurich, 1975), 25-26.

⁷ Josiah Simler, *Oratio de vita et obitu viri optimi praestantissimi Theologi D. Peteri Martyris Vermiglii, Sacrarum literarum in schola Tigurina Professoris* (Zurich: C. Froschauer, 1563), 6, states: "... Coenam Domini Christiano ritu celebravit," which almost certainly refers to the Protestant rite.

⁸ Vermigli's deep convictions about the authority of scripture are evidenced in his *Oratio quam Tiguri primam habuit cum in locum D. Conradi Pellicani successisset*, is found in Vermigli, *Loci Communes. . . ex variis ipsius authoris scriptis, in unum librum collecti & in quatuor Classes distributi* (London: Thomas Vautrollerius, 1583), 1062: "Nam iam inde a prima aetate cum adhuc agerem in Italia, praecaeteris hominum artibus et institutis, hoc unum decrevi persequi, ut literas cum primis divinas et discerem et de cerem, neque conatum successius destituit." Cf. McNair, *Peter Martyr in Italy*, 161-164.

⁹ John Patrick Donnelly, *Calvinism and Scholasticism in Vermigli's doctrine of Man and Grace* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1976), 34.

¹⁰ Frank A. James III, *Peter Martyr Vermigli and Predestination: The Augustinian Inheritance of an Italian Reformer* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 245-250.

¹¹ McNair, *Peter Martyr in Italy*, 179, argued that Vermigli had embraced "the doctrine of justification by faith alone" in Naples. Cf. Donnelly, *Calvinism and Scholasticism*, 172.

¹² Sturm, *Die Theologie Peter Martyr*, 59-61.

Despite cordial receptions in Zurich and Basel, none of their academies had academic posts available to Vermigli.¹³ Strasbourg was his first teaching post and the first test for his Protestant theology. His original appointment in Strasbourg was for one year only, which indicates his probationary status.¹⁴ His teaching ability, moral character and, above all, his theological convictions would have been under careful scrutiny. Furthermore, as an Italian, Vermigli would have had to overcome the prevailing anti-Italian bias of many of the northern Reformers.¹⁵ Although Italian apostates had not yet acquired the heretical reputation of the later Socinians, nevertheless, Italian theologians were viewed with inquisitional suspicion. Certainly, the Strasbourgers had to be careful about whom they placed in positions of theological leadership. If they were to err, it had to be on the side of caution. It was a testimony to Vermigli's theological maturity that he was able to overcome these obstacles so quickly.¹⁶

Klaus Sturm is the only modern scholar to engage in a significant conceptual analysis of Vermigli's early understanding of justification during the Strasbourg period 1543-1547. His careful and insightful analysis is the most important work to date on our Reformer's early view of justification. Sturm stresses that Vermigli's doctrine in Strasbourg was still relatively undeveloped and retained some Catholic strains.¹⁷ He argues that the Strasbourg Protestants

¹³ Simler, *Oratio*, 7. Sturm, *Die Theologie Peter Martyr*, 18, suggests that Vermigli and companions were not so well received in Basel.

¹⁴ Sturm, *Die Theologie Peter Martyr*, 20. Cf. Charles Schmidt, *Peter Martyr Vermigli, Leben und ausgewählte Schriften nach handschriftlichen und gleichzeitigen Quellen* (Elberfeld: R. L. Friderichs, 1858), 50.

¹⁵ Italians were viewed with suspicion by the northern reformers. As he indicates in his letter to Conrad Pellikan, 19 April 1543, Calvin did not immediately extend the right hand of fellowship to Vermigli's compatriot and fellow apostate, Bernardino Ochino, when he arrived in Geneva in 1542. Calvin wrote: "Because I do not trust Italian spirits, I have conversed with Ochino about individual points of our faith, and did this in such a manner that he could not have disguised it from me if his opinions had in any way been different from ours. I then say and can most positively declare that Ochino agrees with us on every *particular*." *Calvini opera*, 39: 462. Although Bucer was a different personality type than Calvin, there is little doubt that he too scrutinized the theology of the Italian visitors, as he implied in his letter to Calvin of 28 October 1542, *Calvini opera*, 39: 450.

¹⁶ Vermigli arrived in Strasbourg in late October 1542 and was teaching in the Strasbourg Academy by mid-November. His letter of 25 December 1542 to Lucca indicates that he had already been engaged in substantial teaching duties. *Loci Communes*, 1071.

¹⁷ Sturm, *Die Theologie Peter Martyr*, 44 cites Charles Schmidt's comment as support: "Als drittes Mittel der Sündenvergebung ausser Predigt und Sakrament nimmt Vermigli, noch mehr oder weniger im katholischen Sinn, die Buße an..." in *Leben*, 41.

granted Vermigli some latitude and time to develop his view of justification.¹⁸ Indeed Sturm concludes that as far as this doctrine was concerned, Vermigli was a "Reformkatholic."¹⁹

It has been assumed generally by Vermigli scholars that Martin Bucer exercised a determinative theological influence over Vermigli. The assumption has been that Vermigli had embraced the rudiments of justification while in Italy, but it was during the Strasbourg period under Bucer that he reached a more mature and distinctive Protestant understanding.²⁰ There is a natural cogency to this line of thinking, especially since Vermigli and Bucer served as colleagues on the faculty of the Strasbourg Academy (1542-1547). It is surmised that Vermigli, the Protestant novitiate, would have fallen under the sway of Bucer, whose theological views were well known.²¹ In one of Vermigli's first letters after his flight from Italy (25 December 1542), he speaks in glowing terms of his benefactor Martin Bucer, whose "godliness" and "hospitality" and diligence in the Lord's work so captured Vermigli's affection.²² Fortunately, Vermigli's first articulation of his understanding of justification is available in a *locus* in his Genesis lectures.²³ But first we turn to the Strasbourg period from 1542-1547 to set the historical context.

Context: The Strasbourg Years (1542-1547)

Vermigli's first Strasbourg period is of considerable importance in determining his earliest views on justification. If he articulated a strong doctrine of justification early during these early Protestant years (1542-1547), then in all probability, it would approximate views he held in Italy.²⁴ There are three writings from this period that bear upon the topic of justification (theses for

¹⁸ Sturm, *Die Theologie Peter Martyr*, 46: "...Martyrs reformierte Zeitgenossen ihn mit Grund zu den ihren rechnen konnten, wenn sie auf das Verbindende sahen und dem gelehrten Ausländer gewisse katholische Abweichungen hingehen ließen."

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 69.

²⁰ Donnelly, *Calvinism and Scholasticism*, 129. Cf. Schmidt, *Leben*, 62-63.

²¹ Bucer may have had some influence on Vermigli's doctrine of predestination. See his *Metaphrasis et Enarratio in Epistolam D. Pauli Apostoli ad Romanos* (Basel, 1562): 409-413. Cf. James, *Peter Martyr Vermigli and Predestination*, 223-244.

²² Donnelly, *Life Letters and Sermons*, 96-97.

²³ Sturm, *Die Theologie Peter Martyr*, 58.

²⁴ Marvin Anderson, *Peter Martyr Vermigli: A Reformer in Exile (1542-1562)* (Nieuwkoop: B. De Graaf, 1975), 342.

student disputations, his commentary on the Apostle's Creed and his Genesis lectures), the most important of which is his small excursus on the topic during his lectures on Genesis.

Throughout his teaching career, it was Vermigli's practice to present various theses drawn from the biblical text for disputation among his divinity students.²⁵ Of the 655 extant disputation theses, a number of them converge on the doctrine of justification.²⁶ The ten "necessary" propositions for debate taken from the fifteenth chapter of Genesis correspond very closely to the *locus* on justification in his Genesis commentary.²⁷ For example, his definition of faith in the Genesis *locus* is duplicated nearly word for word in the propositions.²⁸ Although these theses certainly reflect Vermigli's general theological orientation, their brevity necessarily limits their usefulness. They have much more value when coordinated with his Genesis *locus* on justification.

Vermigli also makes a few brief allusions to justification in his *Una Semplice Dichiaratione sopra gli XII Articoli della Fede Christiana* (A Plain Exposition of the Twelve Articles of the Christian Faith), first published in 1544.²⁹ Affirmation of the Apostle's Creed had long served as a standard by which to measure one's

²⁵ The Disputation theses from Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus (and a few from Judges) were first brought to light by the Basel printer Peter Perna in the indices of the greatly enlarged editions of the *Loci Communes* of 1580-1582. Perna specifically gives the date for these disputation theses as 1543, which is taken to be the starting date. See the introduction and modern English translation by Joseph C. McLelland (ed. and trans.), *Early Writings: Creed, Scripture and Church*, The Peter Martyr Library 1 (Kirksville, MO: Thomas Jefferson University Press, 1994), 83-159. Cf. Sturm, *Die Theologie Peter Martyr*, 36.

²⁶ Seventeen theses explicitly deal with justification. From Genesis, there are 13 theses which derived from Genesis 15:6; one thesis from chapters 5-7 of Leviticus deals with justification and three from propositions from Exodus 20. McLelland, *Early Writings*, 106-107, 144, 156.

²⁷ McLelland, *Early Writings*, 83-84, makes this same observation.

²⁸ Proposition 13.N.6 (from Genesis 15), defines faith as: "Fides est firmus animi assensus divinis promissionibus de Christo ex persuasione Spiritus sancti ad salutem." In the Genesis *locus* he writes: "Fides est assensus firmus animi divinis promissionibus, afflatu Spiritus sancti ad salutem." Peter Martyr Vermigli, *Loci Communes...ex variis ipsius authoris scriptis, in unum librum collecti, et in quatuor Classes distributi* (Geneva: Pierre Aubert, 1624), fol. 707.

²⁹ Peter Martyr Vermigli, *Una Semplice Dichiaratione sopra gli XII Articoli della Fede Christiana* (Basel: Johann Hervagius, 1544). A new English translation of Vermigli's Commentary on the Apostle's Creed by Mariano Di Gangi has been published recently, J. Patrick Donnelly, Frank A. James III and J.C. McLelland (ed.) *The Peter Martyr Reader* (Kirksville, MO: Truman State University Press, 1999), 5-51.

orthodoxy.³⁰ Vermigli's intent was to demonstrate to his Italian congregation that by abandoning Italy, he had not abandoned orthodoxy.³¹ It is noteworthy that Vermigli only occasionally employs the language of justification. The most explicit articulation is found in his exposition of the second article of the Creed ("I believe in Christ"), when considering the phrase: "The third day He rose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty." As he discusses the benefits of Christ's resurrection and heavenly exaltation, he states that "we acquire a new and justified existence not by works of our own, but by the special goodness of God, who graciously bestows it on us without regard to our merits."³² This statement does indeed reflect a strong Augustinian orientation, but does not provide anything substantial about his doctrine of justification. One does detect a tendency to place regeneration in close proximity to justification, although the connection is not developed explicitly.³³ There is also evident a strong moral tone to his understanding of salvation and justification. He states: "it is not sufficient for justification simply to believe that Christ was the Son of God, that he died, was buried and was raised. Even the devil knows all this. What is required is that we have truly accepted these offered benefits, trusting in him for salvation... We must not only seek the remission of sins, but forsake the commission of sins."³⁴ He does not elaborate upon any of these passing statements, which are suggestive, but do not afford significant insight into his understanding of justification.

His lectures in Strasbourg provide a much more productive line of inquiry for his understanding of justification. Simler informs us that Vermigli lectured on the Minor Prophets, Lamentations, Genesis, Exodus and part of Leviticus,³⁵

³⁰ It has been argued that Erasmus used the Apostles Creed in his *Inquisitio de Fide* to defend Luther's orthodoxy. See Craig R. Thompson (ed.), *Inquisitio De Fide: A Colloquy by Desiderius Erasmus Roterodamus* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1950), 6-12.

³¹ Sturm misses the mark when he calls it "seine Dogmatik im Grundriss," *Die Theologie Peter Martyr*, 37. In this work, Vermigli was concerned that friends and fellow reformists in Italy might take his flight from Roman Catholicism as apostasy from Christianity. His hope was that an exposition of his basic Christian beliefs would demonstrate to his fellow Italian reformists that he had abandoned Rome, not Christ.

³² *Ibid.*, 49.

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 52-53

³⁵ Simler, *Oratio*, 7.

however, only the lectures on Genesis and Lamentations are extant.³⁶ Vermigli had prepared extended notes for these lectures but they were not intended for publication. As executor of Vermigli's literary estate, Simler concluded that only the Genesis lecture notes were important enough to see them through the press.³⁷ The commentary on Lamentations lay dormant until early in the next century, when J. R. Stucki discovered them in Zurich and published them for the first time in 1629.³⁸ Vermigli's short commentary on Lamentations never explicitly refers to the doctrine of justification.³⁹ But in his commentary on Genesis, Vermigli does devote an entire *locus* to the subject.⁴⁰ According to our calculations, Vermigli delivered his lectures on Genesis in the academic year 1543-1544.⁴¹ This date finds clear confirmation from the disputation theses for Genesis which are dated from 1543.⁴² These lectures provide the first substantial evidence for his understanding of the doctrine of justification as a Protestant.

The Contours of Justification

If McNair is correct, Vermigli had already embraced a Protestant-like doctrine of justification in Italy before he arrived in Strasbourg. This, he argues, is what Simler meant when he said that "a greater light of God's truth" had dawned on

³⁶ Sturm, *Die Theologie Peter Martyr*, 30-35. After Vermigli's death (12 November 1562), his literary estate fell to his friend and life-long companion, Giulio Santerenziano, who transferred to Josiah Simler the authority to decide what should be published. See his prefatory letter to John Jewel in his *In Primum Librum Mosis, qui vulgo Genesis dicitur Commentarii doctissimi...* (Zurich: C. Froschauer, 1569). Cf. Schmidt, *Leben*, 294.

³⁷ The Genesis lectures were published in Zurich by Christoph Froschauer in 1569 and reprinted several times thereafter. In the second edition (1579), Ludwig Lavater completed the remaining chapters of Vermigli's Genesis commentary. Cf. Sturm, *Die Theologie Peter Martyr*, 33 and Donnelly, *Bibliography*, 94.

³⁸ Peter Martyr Vermigli, *In Lamentationes Sanctissimi Ieremiae Prophetiae Commentarium...* (Zurich: Jacob Bodmer, 1629). J. R. Stucki also discovered Vermigli's lecture notes on the Minor Prophets, but decided they were too sketchy for publication. Cf. Sturm, *Die Theologie Peter Martyr Vermigli*, 32.

³⁹ Vermigli, *Lamentationes*, 32, 51, 69-70.

⁴⁰ Vermigli, *Genesis*, fols. 59r-61v.

⁴¹ James, *Peter Martyr Vermigli and Predestination*, 45-49. Evidence has come to light demonstrating that Vermigli lectured on Paul's epistle to the Romans in the year 1545-1546. Philip Denis, "La correspondance d'Hubert de Bapasse, réfugié lillois à Strasbourg (1545-1547)," *Bulletin de la Société de l'Histoire du Protestantisme Français* 124 (1978): 103-104, discovered the correspondence of Hubert de Bapasse, a young Frenchman from Lille who had come to Strasbourg to study theology.

⁴² *Loci Communes*, (1583), 999.

Vermigli while in Naples.⁴³ If a Protestant view of justification belonged to Vermigli's Italian period, one would expect some trace of it to surface during the Strasbourg years. Although he does not often raise the issue of justification in Strasbourg, neither does he hesitate to discuss the subject when he judges it to be biblically warranted. The opportunity to discuss this doctrine more fully arose when came to the critical verse Genesis 15:6. The importance of this exposition is twofold. First, it is Vermigli's earliest known systematic expression of his beliefs specifically on this topic. Second, because it emerges within approximately one year of his apostasy from Rome, there is the strong presumption that it generally reflects his convictions in his latter years in Italy. Certainly, upon his arrival, Vermigli's theological perspective was judged acceptable to the Reformers of Strasbourg – indeed, it was compatible enough that he was immediately invited to lecture on the Old Testament.

Having come to Genesis 15:6, "And so he [Abram] believed the Lord and he reckoned it to him as righteousness," Vermigli devoted a brief excursus (a little more than five folio pages) to an exposition of the doctrine of justification. He begins, as he most often does, by defining the main terms under discussion – justification, works and faith. Then, following a debate format, he defends four propositions: that the "law does not justify,"⁴⁴ that "justification does not come from the works of the law or morals,"⁴⁵ that "we are justified by faith,"⁴⁶ and finally, that "ceremonies do not justify."⁴⁷ After dealing with each of these, he provides an extended explanation of the nature of forensic justification and clarifies what he means by a three-fold righteousness. He then concludes the *locus* by dealing with various objections, whether justification is by faith alone and why justification is by faith instead of charity.

Vermigli is profoundly Pauline in his understanding of justification. Although he will occasionally cite from the Gospels and from the Old Testament, he most frequently cites from Paul's letters to the Romans and Galatians. One easily can see that Vermigli is particularly aware of Romans 4:3 where Paul specifically recalls Genesis 15:6. He is, as one might expect, also

⁴⁴ Simler, *Oratio*, 9.

⁴⁴ Vermigli, *Genesis*, fol. 59v: "Lex non iustificat."

⁴⁵ Ibid., "Ex operibus legis sive moralibus non habetur iustificatio."

⁴⁶ Ibid., fol. 60r: "Ex fide iustificamur."

⁴⁷ Ibid., "Ceremoniae non iustificant."

mindful of Augustine, but in this *locus*, the fathers play no significant role.⁴⁸

With Vermigli, there are governing theological presuppositions that suffuse the whole *locus*. The two most significant presuppositions are the authority of Scripture and a very strong doctrine of original sin. The frequent, even pedantic, use of Scripture texts to prove every point, reveals a deep-seated conviction that he has not made his case if he has not demonstrated it conclusively from Scripture. If there is one overriding precept, one foundational presupposition which gives heart to Vermigli's theology, it is his profound commitment to the binding authority of the Scriptures. A second governing theological conviction is the doctrine of original sin as developed by Augustine. On every page, either explicitly or implicitly, is the assumption that Adam's fall has robbed all humanity of spiritual life and spiritual ability. The apostle Paul's words, "we were dead in trespasses and sins" echoes throughout the entire *locus*. Indeed, the doctrine of justification is seen as the divine resolution to the spiritual dilemma posed by the fall and Adam's sinful offspring.

These theological convictions are currents which run just beneath the surface of this *locus* and at times surface with powerful effect. One cannot begin to understand Vermigli's view of justification without recognizing these overarching presuppositions.

A. The Forensic Nature of Justification

Concerning justification in the strict sense, Vermigli lays the greatest stress on its forensic character, although he never actually uses the term in the Genesis *locus*.⁴⁹ The forensic character is evident from the fact that he describes justification in distinctively judicial terms. In his etymological discussion of the meaning of the term justification employs such words as "verdict," "justice," "acquit," "judgement," and "condemnation" – forensic terms all.⁵⁰ Furthermore, justification has reference to a divine judgement for he explains it as "to regard," "to pronounce," or "to judge someone and pronounce them righteous by acquitting them."⁵¹ More specifically, by stating that justification is the opposite of condemnation, he confirms that the basic idea of justification is that of

⁴⁸ Ibid., fol. 61r, Augustine is quoted, but this is the only reference to a church father.

⁴⁹ See Alister E. McGrath, *Iustitia Dei: A History of the Christian Doctrine of Justification* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 2: 199 for a definition.

⁵⁰ Vermigli, *Genesis*, fol. 59r.

⁵¹ Ibid., fol. 59r: "pronunciare iustum, illum absolvendo."

acquittal.⁵² Thus, justification, properly speaking, has a legal connotation for two main reasons. First, the etymology of the word itself requires it. But second, his Augustinian anthropology seems to demand it. Because of the legal guilt inherited by all humanity as a result of Adam's fall, there must be a legal remedy. "No one," he says, "is released from the curse by which the wicked sinners are bound, unless its opposite takes place..."⁵³

If justification is primarily a legal concept for Vermigli, the question of how the guilty sinner is legally absolved from the punishment deserved inevitably emerges. To describe this judicial proceeding, he avails himself of the legal concept of non-imputation (*non... imputare*).⁵⁴ The sinner is legally acquitted or justified because God does *not* "impute [sins] to sinners, but rather regards the sinners as if they had not sinned."⁵⁵ In the *locus* itself he does not speak explicitly of a positive imputation, that is, the transfer of the righteousness of Christ to the sinner.⁵⁶ However, in the disputation theses,⁵⁷ which represent precisely the same ideas as his lectures, he does speak unequivocally of "the righteousness of Christ imputed to us by faith."⁵⁸ One can only speculate why he employed the terminology of positive imputation in his disputation theses, but not in the lectures. It may be that the language of non-imputation functions as a kind of theological synecdoche for referring to the full positive imputation of Christ's righteousness to the elect sinner, that is to say, non-imputation represents the whole notion of imputation. Whatever the reason for omitting positive

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid., fol. 60r: "... quia a maledictione qua obstringuntur impij et peccatores nullus absolvitur, nisi opposito succedente. . ."

⁵⁴ Ibid., fol. 59r.

⁵⁵ Ibid., fol. 59r: "Quare iustificare quandoque sumitur pro eo quod est peccata condonare, non illa peccantibus imputare, imo eos pro illis habere qui non peccarint."

⁵⁶ See *Theses D. Petri Martyris Propositae ad Disputandum publice in Schola Argentinensi, Anno Domini MDXLIII*, in the *Loci Communes...ex variis ipsius authoris scriptis, in unum librum collecti, et in quatuor Classes distributi* (Geneva: Pierre Aubert, 1624), 707.

⁵⁷ While one might ordinarily hesitate to invest too much significance in these theses intended for student debates, it is clear from a comparison of the two that they do indeed reflect to a very high degree Vermigli's views expressed in the *locus*. For example, the first four theses reflect precisely the same four propositions asserted the *locus* and in exactly the same order. The formal definitions of faith and justification in the *locus* are very nearly replicated in the theses. Thus, we may properly view the theses as parallel representations of his thought in the *locus*.

⁵⁸ *Loci Communes* (Geneva, 1624), 707: "...justitiam Christi nobis imputatam per fidem..." Cf. McLelland, *Early Writings*, 106.

imputation, one finds in these early Strasbourg years, at least by inference, Vermigli's tentative acceptance of the two-fold movement of positive imputation and non-imputation to explain how the sinner is acquitted when standing before the divine judge.

But Vermigli does not stop there. He also affirms a positive "impartation" (*communicare*) of Christ's righteousness to the sinner. With reference to the first justification he speaks of "the righteousness of Christ, which is *imparted* (*communicatam*) to us."⁵⁹ Usage of this term is significant because it carries with it the connotation of penetration to the inner part of a human being. This term is not exclusively forensic in meaning, but includes some reference to inner renewal. Unfortunately, Vermigli does not explain the relationship between impartation and imputation or what role they play in the divine pronouncement of acquittal. This is one of the difficult pieces of his early doctrine to which we will return as we seek to put the puzzle together. His concept of non-imputation is discussed in a pneumatological context, in which the initial renewing of the Holy Spirit within a person then allows for the non-imputation of sins. It is noteworthy that Vermigli's use of this term corresponds precisely with that of Martin Bucer, who employs the same terminology of impartation in his discussion of justification.⁶⁰ Like Vermigli, Bucer understands justification to be inseparable from *renovatio*, but justification does not take place on account of the interior renewal.⁶¹

Sturm has seen significance in the fact that Vermigli does not always employ the distinctively Protestant terminology of "imputation" in his Strasbourg articulation of justification. He finds it revealing that Vermigli "does not speak explicitly of... imputation."⁶² In assessing Sturm's comment, two

⁵⁹ Vermigli, *Genesis*, fol. 60v: "At iam si tu quaeras quae ista iustitia sit, de qua nunc primo agimus, Respondeo unico verbo, illam esse Christi iustitiam nobis communicatam."

⁶⁰ Martin Bucer, *Metaphrases et Enarrationes Perpetuae...in Epistolam ad Romanos* (Basel, 1562), 12: "...D. Paulus dum de nostri restitutione agit, iuxta significat, ex illa ipsa nostri apud Deum iustificatione, dum ea nobis persuasa est credentibus statim adesse spiritum illum omnis iustitiae, quam re ipsa exhibeamus, formatorem. Inde nunquam ita iustificandi verbo vtitur, quin eo non minus hanc verae iustitiae *communicationem*, quam principium illud, & caput totius salutis, peccatorum condonationem dicere videatur....Sic ergo cum Paulus loqui soleat, & iustificationis vocem remissionem peccatorum primum quidem exprimere, simul tamen semper significare, etiam illum iustitiam *communione*, quam Deus eodem in nobis Spirito..."

⁶¹ McGrath, *Iustitia Dei*, 2: 34-37.

⁶² Sturm, *Die Theologie Peter Martyr*, 68.

observations should be kept in mind. First, Vermigli does indeed explicitly refer to positive "imputation" in the corresponding theses for disputation, which also reflects his understanding of forensic justification at this time. It is noteworthy that Sturm nowhere acknowledges this. Second, it is unfortunate that Sturm also failed to recognize Vermigli's use of the term impartation, which provides a key to his understanding of how the sinner is declared righteous. If we are correct in our analysis, what emerges from the Genesis *locus* is a both a positive imputation of Christ's righteousness and non-imputation of sins to the believer⁶³ and, at the same time, a corresponding impartation of Christ's righteousness. The ground of justification cannot be works of any kind, but the righteousness of Christ exclusively. The acquittal seems related to the external imputation of Christ's righteousness, but this legal procedure also carries with it a moral renovation of the inner being, which creates righteous effects throughout a lifetime. Thus, Vermigli can say "how can it be that anyone should be regarded as righteous without righteousness."⁶⁴ Thus, he seems to press for a two-tiered imputation of Christ's righteousness to the elect sinner, which provides the theological explanation of how the sinner is acquitted. This kind of thinking was not unique to Vermigli, but one finds it fully in accord with distinctively Protestant thought of the sixteenth century.⁶⁵

B. Faith as the Means of Justification

The central focus of his discussion is the proper meaning of faith as it relates to justification. The role of faith fully occupies half of the *locus*. Vermigli defines faith as "the sure assent (*assensus*) of the mind to the divine promises, by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit to salvation."⁶⁶ Faith is to be distinguished from mere opinion,⁶⁷ and living faith from dead faith.⁶⁸ Vermigli especially draws attention to the close relationship between faith and the Holy Spirit. The source

⁶³ Vermigli, *Genesis*, fol. 59r. He also employs the term imputation (*imputatur*) in his citation of Romans 4: 4, *Genesis*, fol. 60r.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, fol. 61r.

⁶⁵ Luther speaks of the "sweet exchange" between Christ and the sinner. See Preserved Smith, ed. *Luther's Correspondence and Other Contemporary Letters* (Philadelphia: The Lutheran Publication Society, 1913), 1: 34.

⁶⁶ Vermigli, *Genesis*, fol. 59r: "fides est assensus firmus animi divinis promissionibus, afflatu Spiritus sancti ad salutem."

⁶⁷ *Ibid.* "opinione".

⁶⁸ *Ibid.* " fol. 59v: "vivam et mortuam"

of faith is not found in the individual, but is derived from the Holy Spirit, who functions in three ways. It is the Holy Spirit who reveals (*revelasset*) the Word of God to the elect, who "illuminates" (*illustraretur*) the mind so that one can understand the Word of God, and who "inflames" (*inflammetur*) the will and the affections when the Word of God is understood.⁶⁹ It is the multifaceted role of the Holy Spirit that softens Vermigli's intellectualist view of faith, for the Holy Spirit not only illuminates the mind, but he also reveals the Word and enflames the heart.⁷⁰ Thus, Vermigli conceives of faith as a "gift of God"⁷¹ through the Holy Spirit, which encompasses both the mind and the heart. He is careful to avoid exaggerating the human capacity of faith by maintaining that as an act of assent, faith "has its own weaknesses and sordid wavering temptations." However he is quick to add that one "may cling to and be confident in it [faith] that you are justified because it comes from the Holy Spirit..."⁷² It is the Holy Spirit that guarantees the efficacy of faith, not human faith itself. One can see here the vital importance of the role of the Holy Spirit in Vermigli's understanding of justification.

The importance of a right understanding of faith is particularly evident in the four propositions he maintains, which occupy the central part of the *locus*. The main theological question behind all four propositions, indeed the central issue behind the entire *locus*, concerns the "means" by which one is justified forensically.⁷³ Vermigli asserts unequivocally that one is not justified through receiving the Law, through good works, or performing ceremonies such as circumcision, but through faith alone (*fide solum*).⁷⁴ His understanding of faith is dynamic, for it is described as a kind of "power,"⁷⁵ which "grasps" (*fides apprehensiva*)⁷⁶ the promises of God.⁷⁷ Despite its power, he is careful to say that

⁶⁹ Ibid., fol. 59r.

⁷⁰ Ibid. Vermigli's intellectualist view of faith parallels that of Augustine, see McGrath, *Iustitia Dei*, 1:29-30.

⁷¹ Ibid., fol. 60r-v: "dona Dei"

⁷² Ibid., fol. 60v: "...nam illa suas habet infirmitates et sordes, titubationem, tentationes... haereas nihilominus et confidas illa te iustificari quo a spiritu sancto est ..."

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Ibid., fol. 61r: "fide solum".

⁷⁵ Ibid., fol. 60v.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Ibid., "in qua tamen fidei apprehensione id te moneo, tibi prorsus ad eius objectum recurrendum esse a te apprehensum...".

this faith "is not therefore itself righteousness."⁷⁸ Faith for Vermigli is the divinely implemented grasping mechanism by which the individual takes hold of God's promises, that is, "remission of sins and regeneration,"⁷⁹ "repentance,"⁸⁰ as well as "holy actions"⁸¹ and "magnificent and outstanding rewards."⁸² This "living" (*vivam*)⁸³ faith is ultimately a gift of the Holy Spirit and brings honor to God. When God gives the gift of faith, "his most magnificent gift is conferred upon us in such a way that he sees will most result in his own honor."⁸⁴ Faith thus honors God.

Vermigli firmly takes a Protestant stance on justification by faith alone.⁸⁵ Justification, he states, is "entirely on the basis of faith,"⁸⁶ that is, a dynamic living faith. Moreover, *sola fide* excludes any concurrent (*concurrat*) relationship with works.⁸⁷ Faith may be linked to several other spiritual actions, but it is distinguished as the exclusive means of justification. Although affirming the importance love, he asserts that justification, however, is by faith and not love (*charitas*), even though he is willing to acknowledge that "love is the means by which faith operates."⁸⁸ Nor is justification by means of repentance, even though repentance is "the indivisible companion of faith."⁸⁹ Vermigli thus maintains

⁷⁸ Ibid., "non ergo fides est ipsa iustitia..."

⁷⁹ Ibid., "remissionem peccatorum et regenerationem"

⁸⁰ Ibid., fol. 61v: "poenitentia"

⁸¹ Ibid., fol. 60v: "sanctas actiones"

⁸² Ibid., "praeclara et eximia premia"

⁸³ Ibid., fol. 59v.

⁸⁴ Ibid., fol. 60r.

⁸⁵ Sturm, *Die Theologie Peter Martyr*, 66 in a footnote argues that Vermigli's use of "*fide solum*" is not the same as Luther. He states that Vermigli understands faith as a "condition" (*Bedingung*) rather than the instrument of justification. This is difficult to maintain in view of the fact that the central issue of the entire *locus* concerns the means of justification. Moreover, Vermigli employs the distinctively Protestant language of *fides apprehensiva*. (Genesis, fol. 60v: "fidei secundam apprehensimus"). To suggest that "*fide solum*" does not correspond to a distinctively Protestant view of justification, is to press beyond the bounds of credulity.

⁸⁶ Vermigli, *Genesis*, fol. 61f: "Vides hic fidei factam esse repromissionem absolutem."

⁸⁷ Ibid., fol. 61r.

⁸⁸ Ibid., "Si quidem charitas est per quam fides operatur..." This seems to parallel Bucer who tends to see faith as "active through love." See D. F. Wright, ed. and trans., *Common Places of Martin Bucer*, The Courtenay Library of Reformation Classics 4 (Appleford, Abingdon: The Sutton Courtenay Press, 1972), 171 and H. P. Stephens, *The Holy Spirit in the Theology of Martin Bucer* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), 65-66.

⁸⁹ Ibid., "est enim individua fidei comes..."

with full Protestant vigor, a doctrine of justification by faith alone.⁹⁰

C. Christ as the Ground of Justification

With his express affirmation of *sola fide*, Vermigli makes clear that a dynamic living faith is the means, but not the ground, of forensic justification. For him, the exclusive basis upon which the divine judge pronounces the elect sinner acquitted is the righteousness of Christ. Whether this righteousness is imputed and/or imparted, it is the only ground of justification. What is it that is apprehended by faith? He answers: "I reply in one word, that it is that righteousness of Christ."⁹¹ Although he does not employ the language of positive imputation in the *locus*, the corresponding theses for disputation suggest that he affirms the righteousness of Christ is imputed to the sinner by means of faith. As he makes clear, what is all-important for him in justification is not the instrument of faith per se but the "object of faith." He states emphatically that "in this grasping of faith . . . you must rush straight back to the object of faith that has been grasped . . ."⁹²

D. *Simul iustus et peccator*

It has been argued that even in his mature thought, Vermigli did not clearly embrace another distinctively Protestant notion, namely, *simul iustus et peccator*.⁹³ One of the crucial questions to be asked then is whether he explicitly or implicitly affirms *simul iustus et peccator* in the Genesis *locus*. A careful analysis reveals that while Vermigli does not employ the Lutheran phraseology, he does affirm the idea. When describing forensic justification he states that God "regards sinners as if they had not sinned."⁹⁴ Here, Vermigli's words seem to require the belief that those who are justified are yet sinners. Again, referring to those who "are already in Christ," he says "while we live here we can do

⁹⁰ Ibid., fol. 60v: "Cum vero astruimus nos iustificari fide, hoc intelligendum est de prima iustitiae et iustificandi significatione quod scilicet fide illud assequimur, ut nostra nobis remittantur peccata et iusti Dei iudicio reputemur."

⁹¹ Ibid., "At iam si tu quaeras quae ista iustitia sit, de qua nunc primo agimus, respondeo unico verbo, illam esse Christi iustitiam..." , 12

⁹² Ibid., "...nos illam fide capere: in qua tamem fidei apprehensione id te moneo, tibi prorsus ad eius objectum recurrendum esse a te apprehensum..."

⁹³ Donnelly, *Calvinism and Scholasticism*, 154 makes this point with reference to Vermigli's Romans *locus* on justification.

⁹⁴ Vermigli, *Genesis*, fol. 59r.

nothing that is not filthy, defective and susceptible to faults in that we still bear in our flesh the traces of decay."⁹⁵ Such a strong Augustinian anthropology pervades Vermigli's *locus* on justification and seems to require the idea of *simul iustus et peccator*. What else can he mean when he says that those who are "in Christ" are still "susceptible to faults," except that Christians are sinners and at the same time justified?

E. Duplex Iustitia

For one so closely linked to Cardinal Contarini and the Italian reform movement, it has been assumed quite naturally that Vermigli owed some theological debt to Contarini. Sturm has explored this connection somewhat concerning the doctrine of justification and has concluded that: "In the final analysis, it seems to me that Martyr's doctrine of justification concurs with that of Contarini..."⁹⁶ Thus an important question arises with regard to Vermigli's doctrine of justification and its relationship to the marquee doctrinal formulation of the Evangelical wing of the Roman Church, *duplex iustitia*.

This doctrine, made famous at the Colloquy of Regensburg 1541 (also called Ratisbon), has received considerable attention among scholars over the course of the twentieth century. It seems to have been identified first with the publication of Johannes Gropper's *Enchiridion Christianae institutionis* in 1538.⁹⁷ This doctrine of *duplex iustitia* underwent a number of different formulations, but the basic idea behind all formulations is that there are two formal causes for justification, the imputed righteousness of Christ and an inherent righteousness acquired by the individual Christian.⁹⁸ The term became historically and theologically relevant at the Colloquy of Regensburg where Protestants, led by Philip Melancthon, and Catholics, led by Cardinal Contarini, reached a formal

⁹⁵ Ibid., fols. 60v-61r: ". . . quod nihil dum hic vivimus agere possumus, non sordidum, mancum et vitio obnoxium, quo adhuc in carne corruptionis reliquias. . ."

⁹⁶ Sturm, *Die Theologie Peter Martyr*, 69: "Im Ergebnis scheint mir Martyrs Rechtfertigungslehre... mit der Contarinis übereinzustimmen."

⁹⁷ Johannes Gropper, *Enchiridion christianae institutionis* (Cologne, 1538). McGrath, *Iustitia Dei*, 2: 57-60, makes a persuasive case that Gropper did not in fact teach a strict *duplex iustitia*, but instead advocated a view that was "functionally identical with the Thomist concept of *iustitia infusa seu inhaerens*."

⁹⁸ McGrath, *Iustitia Dei*, 2:58. Cf. Edward Yarnold, "Duplex Iustitia: The Sixteenth Century and the Twentieth," in *Christian Authority: Essays in Honour of Henry Chadwick*, ed. G. R. Evans (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), 208.

agreement on the doctrine of justification. Besides the main participants, Johann Eck, Johann Gropper and Julius von Pflug on the Catholic side, and Martin Bucer and Johannes Pistorius on the Protestant side, there were a number of theological advisors present including Albert Pighius and John Calvin.⁹⁹ Interestingly enough, Vermigli was originally asked by Contarini to represent the Catholic cause at the Colloquy of Worms in 1540 which then reconvened at Regensburg in 1541 to coincide with the Imperial diet. But for the Pope's decision to add a Papal legate and to reduce the number of theologians, Vermigli too might very well have been at Regensburg in 1541.¹⁰⁰ A version of *Duplex iustitia* resurfaced again at the Council of Trent in 1546, when it was defended by Cardinal Seripando.¹⁰¹

When Vermigli's own doctrine from the Genesis *locus* is measured against the standard formulations of *duplex iustitia*, it is clear that he does not embrace such a notion. Indeed, he appears to reject any version of this doctrine when he states: "that view is wholly overthrown which says that we are justified by grace, yet in such a way that it attributes a role to works, since together with faith they actually lead to justification. I show that this is false."¹⁰² Vermigli can affirm only one formal cause to justification and that is the righteousness of Christ. Klaus Sturm acknowledges that Vermigli rejects *duplex iustitia* in the Genesis *locus*,¹⁰³ yet insists that his view of justification "concurs with that of

⁹⁹ Calvin seems to have been delighted with the agreement. He wrote to Farel: "At length a formula was drawn up, which, on receiving certain corrections, was accepted by both sides. You will be astonished, I am sure, that our opponents have yielded so much... Our friends have thus retained also the substance of the true doctrine, so that nothing can be comprehended within it which is not to be found in our own writings; you will desire, I know, a more distinct explanation and statement of the doctrine. ...However, if you consider with what kind of men we have to agree upon with this doctrine, you will acknowledge that much has been accomplished." Henry Beveridge and Jules Bonnet, ed. *Selected Works of John Calvin: Tracts and Letters* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1983), 4:260. The original French version is found in A. L. Herminjard, ed., *Correspondance des réformateurs dans les pays de langue française* (Geneva: H. Georg, Libraire-Editeur, 1886), 7: 111 (11 May 1541).

¹⁰⁰ McNair, *Peter Martyr in Italy*, 197-199.

¹⁰¹ Hubert Jedin, *Papal Legate at the Council of Trent: Cardinal Seripando*, edited by F. C. Eckhoff (St. Louis: B. Herder, 1947), 348-392. Cf. Hubert Jedin, trans. E. Graf, *A History of the Council of Trent*, 4 vols., (St. Louis: B. Herder, 1957-1961), 239-282. McGrath, *Iustitia Dei*, 2: 68-86; Peter Matheson, *Cardinal Contarini at Regensburg* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), 97-113.

¹⁰² Vermigli, *Genesis*, fol. 61: "Quare illa opinio omnino evertitur, quae ita nos iustificari fide dicit, ut tamen operibus tribuat partem, quod scilicet una cum fide ad iustificandum concurrant."

¹⁰³ Sturm, *Die Theologie Peter Martyr*, 67-68

Contarini, in spite of his rejection of double justification.¹⁰⁴ Often omitted from this modern discussion is the fact that the person with the most direct influence on Vermigli in Italy was Juan de Valdés, and he too rejected *duplex iustitia*.¹⁰⁵ It is not difficult to see why Sturm perseveres in identifying Vermigli with a view of justification he clearly rejects. Sturm's thesis that Vermigli is a quasi-catholic compels him to link Vermigli's doctrine of justification with the moderate wing of Catholicism, such as Valdés and Contarini.¹⁰⁶ This relationship between the reforming Cardinal and the Augustinian theologian warrants further scrutiny.

When Contarini left the Colloquy of Regensburg (29 July 1541) he made his way directly to Lucca for a summit meeting between Emperor Charles V and Pope Paul III in early September. While there, Contarini stayed at Vermigli's monastery of San Frediano.¹⁰⁷ Simler informs us that during this time, "Martyr and Contarini held daily discussions about religion."¹⁰⁸ Simler suggests that these discussions centered on the issues raised at Regensburg, and McNair has little doubt that the specific issue under discussion was *duplex iustitia*. "It is easy enough to conjecture what the two friends discussed – the doctrine of *duplex iustitia* . . ."¹⁰⁹ It makes sense that they would have talked about this doctrine, since Contarini had appointed Vermigli the previous year to the original Catholic delegation that was to meet with the Protestants.¹¹⁰ What makes this bit of historical trivia relevant for our purposes is that Vermigli seems to have had a firsthand account of the theological complexities of double justification as espoused at Regensburg, yet still he rejects this teaching out of hand just two years later in his Strasbourg lectures. Instead of passing by the doctrine in silence, Vermigli takes a clear stand to distinguish his understanding of justification from that of moderate Catholics. With Vermigli's stress on justification by faith alone through the imputation of Christ's righteousness alone, it is difficult to see Vermigli as a "*Reformkatholic*" as Sturms argues.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 69.

¹⁰⁵ José Nieto, *Juan de Valdés and the Origins of the Spanish and Italian Reformations* (Geneva: Librairie Droz, 1970), 317.

¹⁰⁶ Sturm, *Die Theologie Peter Martyr*, 69.

¹⁰⁷ McNair, *Peter Martyr in Italy*, 233. Cf. Ludwig von Pastor, trans. R. F. Kerr *History of the Popes* (London: Kegan Paul, 1923), 11: 477.

¹⁰⁸ Simler, *Oratio*, 9.

¹⁰⁹ McNair, *Peter Martyr in Italy*, 234.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 197-198.

¹¹¹ Sturm, *Die Theologie Peter Martyr*, 69.

Rather, Vermigli is doing precisely the opposite –distinguishing himself from the views of the progressive Catholics.

The Complex of Justification

If Sturm has undervalued the distinctively Protestant elements of Vermigli's understanding of justification, he has nevertheless recognized that there are some strains in Vermigli's early thought which are somewhat unusual and indeed led Sturm to suggest an affinity with certain Catholic notions.

Vermigli defines justification broadly as "righteousness conferred on us by God."¹¹² He recognizes that there are three parts (*tres partes*) or three kinds of righteousness that God confers upon believers.¹¹³ This three-fold distinction is not unique, for his colleague at Strasbourg, Martin Bucer, made a similar three-fold distinction in his 1536 Commentary on Romans.¹¹⁴ In general, Vermigli understands the first righteousness as forensic justification, which we have already discussed. The second righteousness refers to progressive sanctification, and the third has to do with divine blessings and rewards God grants to his people *in life* and in heaven. Vermigli's formal description of the three-fold righteousness is as follows:

But the righteousness conferred on us by God has three parts. The first is remission of sins, regeneration or adoption as sons and admission to eternal life. The second is to do good deeds [and] to live rightly. From the frequent practice of these holy actions various habits of the most noble kind are acquired and in the end, a certain kind of righteousness adheres to us which pleases God. The third is wages and rewards both in our present life and in the one to come. These are said to be our righteousness because they are signs of commendation and approval since they are said to be given to us on account of good deeds.¹¹⁵

¹¹² Vermigli, *Genesis*, fol. 59r: "At iustitia nobis collata a Deo, tres habet partes."

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, fols. 59r, 61r, 61v.

¹¹⁴ Martin Bucer, *Metaphrasis et Enarratio in Epistolam D. Pauli Apostoli ad Romanos* (Basel, 1562): 11-14.

¹¹⁵ Vermigli, *Genesis*, fol. 59r: "At iustitia nobis collata a Deo, tres habet partes. Primam, remissionem peccatorum, regenerationem sive adoptionem filiorum, et cooptationem ad vitam aeternam. Secundam, benefacere, recte vivere, ex quibus frequentibus sanctis actionibus acquiruntur varii nobilissimi habitus, et demum iustitia quaedam nobis inhaerens quae Deo placet. Tertiam, mercedes, remunerationes cum in praesenti vita tum in futura, quae ideo iustitia nostra dicuntur, quod sint illius indicia, commendatio, et comprobatio, cum dicuntur nobis dari propter benefacta."

Vermigli adds that the first righteousness means to pronounce one righteous (*pronunciare iustum*), the second has reference to making righteous (*iustum facere*) and the third is a commendation for being righteous (*commendare aliquos tanquam iustos*).¹¹⁶ Each of these three blessings is grasped by faith that comes from the Holy Spirit.¹¹⁷ This is the basic operating structure with which Vermigli begins his *locus* on justification.

As we have noted, Vermigli's understanding of forensic justification bears distinctively Protestant marks (*sola fide*, the forensic character of justification and imputation), which correspond well with the leading Reformed theologians of his day. What is particularly unusual in his formulation is his inclusion of "regeneration" (*regeneratio*) under the rubric of the first or forensic justification. It has been argued that the relationship between regeneration and justification is particularly crucial for determining whether one is essentially a Catholic or a Protestant. Alister McGrath, states that "the notional distinction between *iustificatio* and *regeneratio* provides one of the best *differentiae* between Catholic and Protestant understandings of justification..."¹¹⁸ Indeed, it is because Vermigli places regeneration in such close proximity to forensic justification that Sturm has judged him to be "*Reformkatholik*."

A careful examination of this first, or as he sometimes calls it, "special"¹¹⁹ justification is thus warranted. To say that forensic justification entails remission of sins, adoption and admission (*cooptationem*)¹²⁰ to eternal life¹²¹ was generally acceptable among Protestant theologians and would have raised few eye-brows, but to include "regeneration" would seem to be another matter altogether. What did Vermigli intend his auditors in his 1543 lectures in Strasbourg to understand by juxtaposing remission and regeneration under the rubric of forensic justification?

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., fol. 60v: "Cum vero astruimus nos iustificari fide, hoc intelligendum est de prima iustitiae et iustificandi significationem, quod scilicet fide illud assequimur....atque illa eadem facultate fidei secundam apprehendimus iustitiam.... qua eadem ratione, virtute scilicet fidei tertia iustitiam consequimur."

¹¹⁸ McGrath, *Iustitia Dei*, 1: 51.

¹¹⁹ Vermigli, *Genesis*, fol. 61r.

¹²⁰ This term (*cooptatio*) has often been translated "election" but Vermigli is not here referring the doctrine of election. Rather the term has the connotation of "admission by election", see Lewis and Short, *A Latin Dictionary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1958), 466 under the verbal form "*coopto*". This translation also conforms to the parallel section in his *In selectissimam D. Pauli Priorem ad Corinth. epistolam Commentarii...* (Zurich: C. Froschauer, 1551), fol. 30r.

¹²¹ Vermigli, *Genesis*, fol. 59r.

Two things stand out in his initial definition of forensic justification. First, by including regeneration, adoption and admission to eternal life, he clearly wants auditors to understand that there is some breadth to his definition of forensic justification, that it is not confined exclusively to forgiveness based on the non-imputation of sins. But rather, justification, as he conceives it, is broad enough also to include reference to the beginning of the Christian life.¹²² Each of these terms (regeneration, adoption and admission to eternal life) suggests a new beginning. Regeneration ordinarily has to do with beginning a new spiritual life, adoption refers beginning with a new family, and admission to eternal life suggests a new destiny. Typically throughout the *locus*, his standard formulation of first justification refers only to forgiveness and regeneration, which implies that it is sufficient to represent the idea of a new beginning for the other elements (adoption and admission to eternal life).¹²³

One nuance to Vermigli's understanding is that he seems unwilling to distinguish entirely the legal ramifications from the moral in any violation of the divine law. To break God's law necessarily involves both a legal and moral dimension. Thus his concept of forensic justification necessarily includes or is accompanied by moral transformation (regeneration). Vermigli's remedy to this is to come at justification from two angles. The first angle is more narrow and approaches justification in itself, which for him, is forensic justification. But he also takes a wider angle of justification which includes not only justification in itself, but its necessary concomitants and consequences. Thus justification for Vermigli is narrowly forensic and includes a complex of divine currents necessarily accompanying justification.

In his formal delineation of the first forensic righteousness, Vermigli concentrates exclusively on what God does. It is God who forgives sins, regenerates/adopts and grants admission to eternal life. The first element is forgiveness and it is not difficult to see that in forgiveness God is seen to address the legal problem of guilt for believers. The notion of adoption has both a legal and familial connotation while admission to eternal life seems to suggest the ultimate benefit of this legal and familial relationship. It is the second element

¹²² Ibid., fol. 61v. He links regeneration with "opening access to God." (*aditum patifaciendi ad Deum*) In his commentary on the Apostle's Creed (written at approximately the same time as his lectures on Genesis), Vermigli also speaks of "the beginning of Christian regeneration," which specifically suggests this idea of beginning. McLelland, *Early Writings*, 48.

¹²³ Ibid., fol. 60v: "novam vitam"

that poses a difficulty. Admittedly, Vermigli's use of the term "regeneration" is ambiguous.¹²⁴ It would seem that he understands regeneration to include the idea of sonship. There are two main reasons why this seems to be included in the meaning. First, the coupling of regeneration with adoption would suggest that he intends them as virtual synonyms. If "adoption" implies legal entrance into a family, then the Vermigli's use of "regeneration" ought to approximate that basic meaning. Thus, it appears that he sees regeneration and adoption as the two avenues of entrance into sonship, that is, by spiritual birth or spiritual adoption. The important thing to note is that "regeneration" (and adoption) is broad enough to refer, not only to the beginning of inner transformation or renewal, but also to an external status and formal acceptance into a new family. It has been observed before that this term has had a wide range of meaning among other Reformers as well. Calvin, for example, used the term "regeneration" very broadly to refer to the whole process of sanctification.¹²⁵ Second, it is very helpful to observe that when Vermigli does address the matter of inner transformation in the *locus*, employing such terms as "renewal" and "restoration,"¹²⁶ it never refers to the first or forensic righteousness, but always to the second righteousness which is technically aligned with sanctification. The picture which emerges from his *locus* is that the primary understanding of regeneration is sonship. Thus, by speaking of forgiveness, regeneration or adoption and admission to eternal life, Vermigli is saying that forensic justification entails forgiveness of sins, sonship and eternity with God. According to Vermigli, all the benefits of forensic justification have to do with what God does with regard to, not what God does in the believer.

It is important to appreciate that all of these "results," which come from the conferring of God's first forensic righteousness, have to do with what God does for a person, not what he does for himself. Whatever else Vermigli intends by the term first justification, he wants his auditors to understand that it has to do

¹²⁴ Ibid., fol. 61r. At one point he virtually seems to identify forgiveness with regeneration for he states: "Cumque iustificatio sit quae dam spiritualis nova regeneratio..." (justification is a kind of new spiritual regeneration.)

¹²⁵ François Wendel, trans. Philip Mairet *Calvin: The Origins and Development of his Religious Thought* (New York: Collins, 1965), 242-243.

¹²⁶ Vermigli, *Genesis*, fols. 59r: "id est sanctum, vel instaurando naturam, vel per habitus a sanctis et rectis actionibus emanantes" and 60v: "Preterea ut aliud caput exponam, nostra salus et vera instauratio id videtur exigere, ut reformemur ad Dei imaginem."

exclusively with what God does for his people, not what they do for themselves. The primary emphasis is clearly on the external status of the individual.

Having argued for Vermigli's extrinsic use of the term regeneration, it is nevertheless difficult to escape some collateral sense of inner renewal that tends to be associated with this term. This nagging complexity comes from the fact that in the *locus* he does not speak of positive imputation, but rather prefers to speak of "impartation." This notion of impartation implies that Vermigli envisions some level of inner transformation in his conception of forensic justification. Such an ambiguous term, at the very least, leaves the door open for such an understanding. To be sure, this term was used variously by Reformers, so Vermigli is not unique in this regard.¹²⁷ Furthermore, it is difficult to distinguish the "regeneration" of the first justification from the "new life" of the second justification or sanctification for they seem to overlap. It seems that regeneration serves two intentions, to speak extrinsically of entrance into a new status and also to speak intrinsically of entrance into a "new life" or new capacity for life. The viability of this understanding is strengthened by the fact that Martin Bucer seems to embrace a similar notion.¹²⁸ It would be difficult to imagine that the senior theologian in Strasbourg, the man who provided sanctuary and opportunity, would not exercise significant influence upon Vermigli.

There is no hard line between this three-tiered righteousness, rather, for Vermigli each seems to overlap with the other. The hard line that Vermigli does draw is based upon his Augustinian anthropology, namely that spiritually dead men cannot justify or sanctify themselves. Both justification and sanctification are about what God does to and in individuals. The dividing line between Catholics and Protestants for Vermigli is not so much between regeneration and justification, but between Augustinian and Pelagian anthropologies. It would appear that McGrath's assertion, that what distinguishes a Protestant from a Catholic view of justification is the notional distinction between justification and regeneration,¹²⁹ does not apply very well to the early Vermigli. For Vermigli, the dividing line is *sola fide* (with its Augustinian anthropology), which stresses that the only means by which fallen sinners may be justified, is faith.

¹²⁷ McGrath, *Iustitia Dei*, 2:13, 32-33.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 2:34-36.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 2: 2.

Vermigli's ambiguous use of the term regeneration as a component of forensic justification suggests that it functions as a bridge or transitional element between justification and sanctification. To his mind, the externalism of sonship gives way to a "new life" or a new capacity for doing good deeds. This understanding finds a certain resonance with Martin Bucer who, as McGrath informs us, "links the first and second justification on the basis of the regenerating activity of the Holy Spirit."¹³⁰ This seems to be the case in Vermigli as well.

Based upon what God has done for the believer, Vermigli then addresses the second kind of righteousness that he equates with "making righteous."¹³¹ So he moves from first justification and what God has done, to what the believer is to do now that he has been legally acquitted or justified forensically. Because of forensic justification, the believer enters a "new [kind of] life" which "necessarily"¹³² exhibits "holy actions." This new life is characterized by good deeds that are necessary for two reasons. First, good deeds are necessary simply because God "requires" obedience. Second, they are necessary because salvation "demands" that believers be "restored to the image of God."¹³³ For Vermigli, true "salvation" demands a holy life.¹³⁴ It is inconceivable to Vermigli that one could be saved and not be also inwardly restored. Or said another way, one cannot be justified without the concomitant of sanctification. One is incomplete without the other. He says that because the believer has been "reborn in Christ" or "saved," the "deformed" *imago Dei* will begin to be restored with the inevitable result that there will be a holy life and holy actions. Vermigli envisions here a progressive sanctification in which there will be internal transformation where the image of God in the believer is increasingly renewed. He speaks of renewal and restoration of the image of God that takes place through the Holy Spirit and through the activity of the individual believer.¹³⁵

There is a clear sense of progression through four main phases in the second righteousness. The first phase begins with what he calls "new life" (*vitam*

¹³⁰ Ibid., 2: 37.

¹³¹ Vermigli, *Genesis*, fol.59r.

¹³² Ibid., 60v. G. W. Bromiley, "The Doctrine of Justification in Luther," *The Evangelical Quarterly* 24 (1952), 95,

¹³³ Ibid.: "reformemur ad Dei imaginem."

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

novam), which seems to have some affinity with regeneration, in that both terms connote a new beginning. This new life entails a second phase in which the broken or "deformed" image of God is "restored." Phase three sees the mind and will "renewed" so that "holy actions" are performed. The repeated exercise of holy actions inevitably enters a fourth phase in which habit patterns are established, and thus finally "in the end" there is an "inherent" righteousness (*iustitia inhaerens*) within the believer. This is the process by which one is "made righteous."

Vermigli is eager to distinguish this second righteousness from the first righteousness in one important respect. For him, this process of sanctification from new life to inherent righteousness "cannot satisfy the justice of God" nor are they able "to stand in the divine judgement." That is to say, such good deeds are in themselves, never good enough to measure up to the standard of a Holy God. No matter how "good" the deeds are, or how numerous, they are regarded as "menstrual cloths in the presence of God." One sees a very clear Augustinian anthropology informing his thought here.

Because of what God has done in them, believers now do good works repeatedly so that they engender a habit pattern in their lives. By consistently doing good works all their lives, believers will see at the end of their lives that a "certain kind of righteousness germinates in them and this pleases God."¹³⁶ This is not the divine righteousness that acquits, but a secondary, derivative human righteousness that cannot acquit but can please God. This is what Vermigli means in his disputation theses when he speaks of an inherent righteousness and an acquired righteousness. He means to suggest that an internal righteousness is acquired over the long haul by the habit (*habitus*)¹³⁷ of doing good (righteous) deeds.

The third part of this conferred divine righteousness is about what we have done. The internal righteousness acquired over the course of a godly lifetime will be rewarded both in this life and in the life to come. The rewards are "signs" of the second righteousness or sanctification and "gifts of God," and are given "on account of good deeds." Although Vermigli acknowledges that this third righteousness is based on good deeds, he is very clear that there is no merit. The foundation and root of these good deeds that acquire rewards is the mercy of

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ Ibid., fol. 59r.

God. To make his point, Vermigli paraphrases the famous *dictum* of Augustine: "God crowns in us not our own gifts but those of himself."¹³⁸

There is also a causal sequence evident here, with the first giving rise to the second part and then the second giving rise to the third part. It may be more than "causal," that is to say, it might be more precisely described as "overlapping," since there are transitional elements in each of the three which cause and give rise to the subsequent righteousness. Vermigli wants his readers to understand that because of what God has done, the believer should be moved to perform good works in this life. And based upon these good works, rewards will follow. These three parts make up the full or complete meaning of justification.

Conclusions

Was Vermigli fully Protestant while serving in Strasbourg? How is one to account for the peculiar nuances to Vermigli's doctrine of justification? In an attempt to understand these less than Protestant features in Vermigli, Sturm has classified him as a "*Reformkatholic*", which he further identifies with the Italian *spirituali*, especially Cardinal Contarini. In order to address this fundamental question, several observations need to be made.

Little effort is required to identify the Augustinian parallels in Vermigli's doctrine of justification. Whether it is faith viewed as a gift of God¹³⁹ or the "strongly intellectualist" orientation of faith,¹⁴⁰ or the stress on the close relationship between justification and internal renewal through the Holy Spirit,¹⁴¹ or the acknowledgment that righteousness becomes intrinsic to the person,¹⁴² or the stress on "adoptive filiation,"¹⁴³ or the conception of justification in terms of non-imputation,¹⁴⁴ or the inclusion of sanctification under the aegis

¹³⁸ Ibid., fol. 61r. The original citation is from Augustine, *Epistulae*, 194.5, 19 (*Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum*, 57.190).

¹³⁹ Augustine, *Ad Simplicianum de diversis Quaestionibus*, 1.2.12 (*Corpus Christianorum Series Latina*, 44: 36.324-325).

¹⁴⁰ McGrath, *Iustitia Dei*, 1:30.

¹⁴¹ Augustine, *Epistulae*, 98.2 (*Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum*, 44). Cf. McGrath, *Iustitia Dei*, 1: 32.

¹⁴² McGrath, *Iustitia Dei*, 1: 31.

¹⁴³ Ibid., 1: 32.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., 2:22: "Augustine defines justification in terms of non-imputation of sin rather than the imputation of Christ's righteousness."

of justification,¹⁴⁵ or even the function of merit and reward,¹⁴⁶ Augustinian currents run throughout Vermigli's early thought on justification. In summing up Augustine's view of justification, McGrath writes: "Augustine's discussion of *iustitia*. . . demonstrates how the doctrine of justification encompasses the whole of Christian existence from the first moment of faith, through the increase in righteousness before God and man, to the final perfection of that righteousness in the eschatological city."¹⁴⁷ One finds a virtual equivalency in Vermigli's conception of justification that encompasses the beginning of the Christian life to the eternal reward.¹⁴⁸ Admittedly there are some significant differences, but this summation of Augustine's understanding of justification finds deep resonance with Vermigli in Strasbourg.

If his Augustinian theological heritage accounts for the apparently non-Protestant nuances in Vermigli's early view of justification, how is one to account for the distinctively Protestant conceptions also present? The answer to this query lies principally with Martin Bucer. A brief comparison of Vermigli's early thought with that of Bucer reveals a virtual replica.¹⁴⁹ They share soteriological indebtedness to Augustine,¹⁵⁰ as well as the standard Protestant

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., 1:32. McGrath describes Augustine's view of justification as follows: "For Augustine, justification includes both the beginning of man's righteousness before God and its subsequent perfection, the event and the process, so that what later became the Reformation concept of 'sanctification' is effectively subsumed under the aegis of justification."

¹⁴⁶ Vermigli can say: "'To justify' also sometimes means...on the grounds of being righteous and to furnish them with rewards, by giving payment both in this life and in the one to come, while they are shown to be rewarded because of their good deeds." *Genesis*, fol.59r. Vermigli is careful to add Augustine's words: God crowns in us not our own gifts but those of himself." *Genesis*, fol. 61r. Cf. J. Rivière, "Mérite" in *Dictionnaire de théologie Catholique*, 10: 642-651. Vermigli also parallels Bucer at this point. *Metaphrasis*, fol. 13.

¹⁴⁷ McGrath, *Iustitia Dei*, 1: 36.

¹⁴⁸ Vermigli, *Genesis*, fol. 59r. Bucer has a similar stress on temporal and eternal reward. See W. P. Stephens, *The Holy Spirit in the Theology of Martin Bucer* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), 57-58, 61.

¹⁴⁹ On the matter of justification, Bucer, like Vermigli, has been judged to be beyond the pale of Protestantism. Eduard Ellwein, *Vom neuen Leben. De novitate vitae* (Munich, 1932), 63-66, 109-117, 132-133, 166-168, concludes that Bucer is not really a Protestant. Walter Köhler, *Dogmengeschichte als Geschichte des christlichen Selbstbewusstseins*. vol. 2, *Das Zeitalter der Reformation* (Zurich, 1951), 362-364, 418 reaches the opposite conclusion. See Stephens, *Bucer*, 48-49.

¹⁵⁰ Bucer, like Vermigli, affirms an Augustinian view of merit and rewards. See Bucer, *Metaphrasis et enarratio in epist. D. Pauli ad Romanos* (Basel, 1562), fol. 13. Bucer also shared with Vermigli and Augustine an intellectualist view of faith. See D. L. Wright, ed. and trans., *Common Places of Martin Bucer*, The Courtenay Library of Reformation Classics 4 (Appleford, Abington: The Sutton

elements such as *sola fide*, imputation and the forensic character of justification. But there are also distinctive aspects which they both embrace. The most distinctive parallel between Vermigli and Bucer is the three-fold conception of righteousness.¹⁵¹ Much like Vermigli, Bucer affirms a "primary justification" which brings forgiveness of sins and the imputation of Christ's righteousness to the sinner and then manifests itself in "secondary justification" and good deeds. A third justification is identified with final glorification.¹⁵² This three-fold understanding is almost exactly what we found in Vermigli. Vermigli's formulation does not appear to be mere coincidence. Furthermore, as noted earlier, it is remarkable that both Vermigli and Bucer employ the same distinctive terminology of "impartation" to describe the concomitant work of the Holy Spirit, which accompanies imputation.¹⁵³

What we find in Vermigli's understanding of justification in Strasbourg is a doctrine in transition. Strasbourg was the place where his Reformed view of justification emerged out of a deep-seated Augustinianism, which had already incorporated distinctive elements of a Protestant view of justification while in Italy, and is refined by his encounter with Bucer. There appear to be three distinct phases in Vermigli's early development of the doctrine of justification. First, his many years of training and reading Augustine and Augustinian theologians (Gregory of Rimini) inculcated in him an Augustinian soteriology and anthropology. His Augustinianism also prepared him to respond favorably to Protestant ideas – especially with the growing recognition of Pelagianism in the Catholic Church. Second, his contact with Valdés in Naples and the Italian reform movement led by Contarini produced a willingness to read Protestant writings. In this reading of Protestants, Vermigli began to modify his purely Augustinian conception of justification and to incorporate distinctively Protestant ideas into his view of justification, so much so, that he thought himself to have more in common with Protestants than Catholics. Furthermore, it is significant that even before his abrupt departure from Italy, Vermigli regarded Bucer as the most learned of the new theological voices arising in

Coutenay Press, 1972), 171.

¹⁵¹ This was confirmed in private correspondence with Alister McGrath, of Wycliffe Hall, Oxford University. He knows of no other major reformer in the early years of the Reformation who held to such a three-fold scheme.

¹⁵² McGrath, *Iustitia Dei*, 2: 203. See Bucer, *Metaphrases*, fol. 119.

¹⁵³ Bucer, *Metaphrases*, fol. 12.

Protestant Europe.¹⁵⁴ The moment Vermigli set foot in Strasbourg, he was predisposed to listen carefully to Bucer. Third, after arrival in Strasbourg and spending time with Bucer, Vermigli's modified Protestantism underwent further development under the tutelage of Bucer. So that by the time of his lectures on Genesis and his *locus* on justification, he had come essentially to emulate the views of Bucer on justification – although the Augustinian strain, still manifests itself in significant measure.

What is also interesting is that of the three influences on his early doctrine of justification, the Italian *spirituali* is the weakest. This counters Sturm's assertion that while in Strasbourg, Vermigli held "an astonishingly similar doctrine of justification [to that of] *Il Beneficio di Giesu Christo*, which came out of the circles surrounding Juan de Valdés."¹⁵⁵ Sturm failed to take account of the fact that Vermigli was a decade older than Valdés, much better educated (he was a doctor of theology) and his thought was already deeply permeated with Augustinianism. This is not to minimize the importance of Valdés for Vermigli, it is to merely recognize that Vermigli was not simply a student of Valdés. One finds not a hint of the Spaniard's distinctive notion of a "general justification" in Vermigli. In a sense, this should not be surprising. Valdés influence lay more in the realm of facilitating and encouraging Vermigli's own reading of the Protestants. Valdés introduces Vermigli to a whole new theological world, but it is too much to suggest that Vermigli's early Protestant doctrine of justification is derived significantly from Valdés. We therefore, need to revise Sturm's characterization of Vermigli in Strasbourg from a "Reformkatholic" to an "Augustinian-Bucerian."

The learned Italian stranger who arrived in Strasbourg in the winter of 1542 was, whether he realized it not, a man on a theological journey, and Martin Bucer was to be his guide. His encounter with Protestantism through books prepared him for further theological refinement. Vermigli found in Bucer a mentor in whom Augustinianism converged with the distinctive ideas of Protestantism, whose doctrine of justification married the theology of Augustine to the distinctive insights of Luther. Vermigli could not have landed in a more conducive theological environment.

¹⁵⁴ Willem van't Spijker, "Bucer als Zeuge Zanchis im Straßburger Prädestinationsstreit," in *Reformiertes Erbe: Festschrift für Gottfried W. Locher zu seinem 80 Geburtstag*, ed. H. A. Oberman, E. Saxer, A. Schindler, and H. Stucki (Zurich: Theologischer und Buchhandlungen, 1992), 332.

¹⁵⁵ Sturm, *Der Theologe Vermigli*, 69.

JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH – A NEGLECTED REDISCOVERY?

Timothy Grass

Introduction

Evangelicalism professes belief in justification by faith alone, and claims that during the Protestant Reformation of the sixteenth century this doctrine was rediscovered. This is one of the main differences between Evangelicals and Orthodox, as both traditions recognize. But how does belief in justification by faith alone shape our Christian experience? In spite of our claim to uphold it, has it been somewhat neglected in our church life?

For four years I have been interested in relationships between Evangelicals and Orthodox, and in why people convert from one tradition to the other. As I have listened to the stories of converts from Evangelicalism to Orthodoxy, I have noticed how rarely they mention the fact that they have, of necessity, given up belief in justification by faith alone. It is almost as if this doctrine was not very significant in shaping their experience as Evangelicals, or that it did not remain so; and that is why they do not miss it now that they have become Orthodox. So I want to consider the role which this doctrine should play in our spirituality as Evangelicals. Before doing so, I shall outline briefly the doctrine of justification as we find it in the Scriptures and the writings of the Protestant Reformers.

The subject is an important one, but perhaps what I say is more of a "cry from the heart" (*cri de coeur*) than a lecture. I make no claim to originality; what follows is certainly not the utterance of an expert, since I am more of a historian than a theologian (My thanks are due to those theologians with whom I have shared a draft of this article and who offered valuable responses). Yet it may be that in bringing together examination of justification in Scripture, in the Christian theological tradition, and in contemporary spirituality and church life, its relevance and importance may become clearer for us.

Justification in Scripture

As Protestants or neo-Protestants, what do we mean by the phrase "justified by faith alone"? The Anglican systematic theologian J. I. Packer describes justification as:

God's act of remitting the sins of guilty men, and accounting them righteous, freely, by his grace, through faith in Christ, on the ground, not of their own works, but of the representative law-keeping and redemptive blood-shedding of the Lord Jesus Christ on their behalf.¹

Justification is Paul's explanation of how a righteous God can keep his covenant promises, forgive covenant-breaking sinners who place their trust and hope in Christ, and fulfil his purpose to bring them, whether Jews or Gentiles, into personal relationship with him as members of his covenant people. It is rooted not only in the Old Testament but also in Paul's own experience of conversion to Christ.

The doctrine of justification is sometimes criticized as a Western doctrine. It is rooted in an understanding of the atonement which emphasizes Christ's work in dealing with the guilt of human sin. This is because our alienation from God is seen primarily as the result of sin. That is regarded as a very "Western" opinion. I appreciate that Orthodox theologians have objected to it on this ground, but I do not believe that we can read the Bible without encountering a great deal of the language of guilt and sacrifice.

The Old Testament uses the picture of the law court as one way of describing God's dealings with his people (for example, Isa. 43.25-28), and with all the peoples of the earth (Isa. 41.1, 21; 45.20-21). In a Hebrew court, the person "justified" is the one in whose favour the judge pronounces. To be justified means that the judge finds this person "not guilty". God is the Judge, and judges according to his perfect righteousness. This is not all; he makes that verdict a reality by showing favour to those whom he justifies. As a righteous God, he is faithful to the covenant which he has inaugurated with humanity, a covenant which is intended to make righteousness a reality in human existence and in the whole created order once more.

By Paul's time, many Jews were aware that the law had not been kept. The covenant which God made with Israel pronounced curses on those who broke

¹ J. I. Packer, "Justification", *Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (Leicester, 1980), 2.842.

the law. Many of Paul's contemporaries saw themselves as living under the curses. Their hope was that God would intervene in history in order to redeem his people. Paul's message is that this intervention has already taken place. God has kept his covenant promises. Christ has come. He has satisfied the law's claims upon us, and borne God's covenant wrath against law-breakers (a category which includes the whole of humanity, not Jews alone, since God's requirements are in some measure known to all; cf. Rom. 1.18ff; 2.14-15). We who believe are justified (declared righteous by God) on the grounds of Christ's atoning sacrifice in our place, and through faith in him we are made members of Christ. In him God is creating a new covenant people, including all the nations of the earth, Gentiles as well as Jews, just as he had promised to Abraham (Gen. 12.3). Through faith in Christ, we enter a new life as those who have been declared "right with God": the verdict to be pronounced on the last day is known already. The "age to come" has already begun, an age in which the effects of sin are completely undone, to the extent that the whole created order will share in the blessing.

I have only said a few words about the scriptural teaching, because it is probably familiar to us. What may be less familiar is the manner in which this was developed by theologians in later centuries. I want to expand on that, because of our roots as Baptists in the theology which was developed during the Reformation era.

The emergence of the doctrine

One of the biggest problems in church history has been presented by the curse of Babel. Translation from one language to another so often results in misunderstanding and distortion. This happened with the Biblical "justification" terminology: the Greek verb *dikaion* was rendered into Latin as *iustificare*, which was treated as equivalent to *iustum facere*, "to make righteous". In the process there was a major shift in meaning. Whereas for Paul the emphasis was on God's verdict that believing sinners are counted as righteous, the Latin terminology conveys the idea of God's making us righteous. This later idea is certainly biblical, but in Greek "justification" terminology is rarely, if ever, used to express it.

During the early centuries, there was little discussion of the theme of justification: if Karl Barth was right to say that the article by which the church

stands or falls is not justification but the confession of Jesus Christ², then we can understand that the Fathers had more important matters to clarify concerning the Trinity and the Person of Jesus Christ. The first to discuss justification extensively was Augustine of Hippo (354-430), who taught that God justifies sinners by *making* them righteous: he does this by pouring love for him into their hearts. Augustine saw justification as God not counting our sins against us, and healing our wills. Justification begins at baptism and continues as God pours his grace into our lives and makes us holy. His view has been described as justification by faith-working-through-love.

In the later Middle Ages, the doctrine of justification became a favourite topic of theological discussion. This was partly because the rise of humanism brought a new emphasis on individual consciousness: justification was seen as answering the question, how may individuals enter a right relationship with God? Thus theologians became very interested in two writers who had much to say about the individual's relationship with God – Paul and Augustine. The Reformation, too, drew much of its initial inspiration from Augustine, but it represented a break from this tradition of understanding.

Martin Luther

For Luther,

... if we lose the article of justification, we lose all things together. Therefore it is most necessary, chiefly and above all things, that we teach and repeat this article continually, as Moses says about the law. For it cannot be beaten into our ears enough or too much. Indeed, though we learn and understand it well, none of us grasps it perfectly, or believes it with all his heart.³

He had been considered exemplary as a monk. Yet he was subject to an overpowering agony of soul: however hard he tried to follow a life of devotion and obedience, he never felt that his efforts made him acceptable to God. Indeed, he was tormented by a sense of alienation from a God who was hostile towards him on account of his sin, and he confessed to feelings of hostility towards such a God. His "breakthrough" came when he realized that "the

² Quoted in Hans Küng, *Justification: The Doctrine of Karl Barth and a Catholic Reflection* (London, 1964), 8.

³ Martin Luther, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians*, tr. P. S. Watson (London, 1953), 40 (altered); on Gal. 1.3.

righteousness of God" in Romans 1.17 is not that which God displays by judging impartially all who seek salvation, and which leads him to condemn those sinners who do not reach the required standards of holiness, but that which he displays in saving them. It is not telling us about what God is, but about what he gives. The same is true of other similar phrases, such as the mercy of God and so on. The righteousness of God is not a righteousness which leads him to *punish* the sinner for failing to meet the standards, but a righteousness which God graciously *gives* to the sinner. Instead of leaving man to meet the pre-conditions for justification by doing what he can, God meets them himself in Christ. God gives sinners that which they need in order to meet his standards: he gives his righteousness to sinners as they exercise faith in Christ. (Faith, too, is God's gift.) In the context of that faith-union, an exchange takes place: Christ gives us his righteousness, and our sin is transferred to him. Believers are now justified, because they have thus met the conditions for acceptance by God. But in this process, we are passive rather than active: all we have done is to receive God's righteousness as a gift. Luther's discovery of the meaning of the righteousness of God was the great breakthrough which, over time, had such an impact on his personal experience and his theology. This is the first part of Luther's discovery – the idea that righteousness becomes ours through faith.

So the first thing which Luther discovered was that we receive God's righteousness through faith, not through works. The second was that justification was not on the basis of anything *in us*, but on the basis of what Christ had done *for us* on the cross. Believers are justified on the basis of Christ's righteousness which is located *outside* them, rather than on the basis of a righteousness *within* them. In stating this as explicitly as he did, Luther was moving beyond Augustine's teaching – and beyond the teaching of anybody since the New Testament. Augustine and Luther agreed that God gives a righteousness which justifies us, but Augustine located this *within* the believer, whereas Luther located it *outside* the believer, in Christ, with whom we are united through faith. An exchange takes place, in which Christ's perfect righteousness becomes ours and our sin is transferred to him. We are counted as righteous because Christ's righteousness is treated as if it was ours.

The consequence of Luther's new understanding was that he saw the Christian as being "at once righteous and a sinner" (*simul iustus et peccator*). This marks another difference between Luther and Augustine. Augustine had taught that we are partly righteous, and so cannot be sure of our ultimate acceptance by

God, although the evidence of God's grace at work in us may give us good reason to entertain a hope that we shall be accepted; Luther taught that we are both completely righteous and completely sinful. While it is true that we are not yet completely righteous in experience, in Christ we are reckoned as already being completely righteous. As far as our experience is concerned, we are sinners in fact, but righteous in hope. Like a sick man being treated by a doctor, we are ill at present, but we know that one day we shall be well: the fact that in Christ we are counted as completely righteous means that we can be assured of our salvation.

Luther's stress on faith did not lead him to devalue the sacraments, however. He believed that infants are regenerated in baptism, the sacrament by which justification becomes ours (though he was unclear as to whether it was the faith of the infant, the sponsors or the church which was at work in baptism). He condemned those who think that inward faith is enough without using the outward means by which God's grace is given to us – the means of word and sacrament. In his understanding, God addresses his word of promise to us in baptism, and we respond to it in faith. The story goes that on one occasion, when tempted by Satan, Luther replied "I have been baptized" (*baptizatus sum*) – not because he believed his baptism had saved him, but because in baptism the gospel is proclaimed to us in a unique way.

Luther's colleague Philip Melanchthon (1497-1560) did much to shape the course of Lutheran theological development. For him, justification was the chief article of the Christian faith. He developed the use of "forensic" language (language derived from the law-court) to explain God's work in and for us. Justification is a divine declaration that we are reckoned righteous, a declaration made *in foro divino* ("in the heavenly court"). Sanctification or regeneration is the process of being *made* righteous, a process which begins at the moment of justification, when we place our trust in Christ to save us. In Melanchthon's scheme, we can now see a clear distinction being made between justification and sanctification, a distinction which was widely followed in Protestant circles. We can also see how this differs from what Augustine had taught. Augustine said that in justification we are made righteous, whereas Melanchthon said that we are declared to be righteous.

Some advocates of the "New Perspective" on justification have warned against making Luther's experience of soul-anguish normative for Christians today by insisting on adherence to his formulation of the doctrine of

justification⁴ It is true that we must understand Luther's doctrine against the background of the theology of his time. In part, it represented a protest against what the devastating effects of what he considered to be the Pelagianism of the *via Moderna*, which encouraged those seeking salvation to "do what you can" in the hope that God would reward them by granting them grace. Initially, too, he saw himself as returning to the teaching of Augustine, the "doctor of grace", from whom he considered that Rome had deviated. The "New Perspective" is right to point out that Luther's opponents are not necessarily ours (though in some areas they may hold similar views). Yet that need not invalidate Luther's discovery: as Thielman has pointed out, equating one school of thought among the religious leaders of his day with Paul's Jewish opponents need not mean that Luther has misinterpreted Paul's positive teaching regarding how it is that sinful human beings can be accepted by God⁵ That must be assessed in the light of the biblical evidence. My own opinion is that, while the "New Perspective" is right to set Paul in his Jewish context, some of its statements about the nature of his opponents' views are as open to question as some of Luther's, and that some of its exegesis of Paul's comments on justification is not completely convincing. I still believe that Reformation thinking concerning justification contains important biblical insights which must not be neglected. Whereas N. T. Wright describes justification as God's declaration that we are already accepted as members of his covenant people, Reformation theology would want to speak of justification as in some sense itself the means whereby God accepts us.

John Calvin

At the heart of the soteriology of Calvin is his doctrine of the union of the believer with Christ. He taught that faith unites us to Christ, so that we are grafted into Christ's body and he dwells in us. This has two consequences: our justification, by which he meant God's declaration that we are accepted as righteous, and our regeneration, by which he meant the lifelong process of transformation into Christ's likeness. Such a soteriology helps us to answer the accusation that the Evangelical doctrine of justification is based on a "legal fiction" – God counting us righteous when in reality we are not. Since we are

⁴ A pioneer of this way of thinking was Krister Stendahl; see his "The Apostle Paul and the Introspective conscience of the West", in *Paul among Jews and Gentiles* (London, 1977), 78-96.

⁵ Frank Thielman, *Paul and the Law: A Contextual Approach* (Leicester, 1994), 46.

united with Christ, his righteousness can be said to be ours.

For Calvin, like Luther, justification is the main hinge on which religion turns.⁶ He held that the Scriptural doctrine of justification had been lost by Rome, with disastrous results: "Wherever the knowledge of it is taken away, the glory of Christ is extinguished, religion abolished, the Church destroyed, and the hope of salvation utterly overthrown." (*Reply to Sadoletto*) Calvin describes justification as "the acceptance with which God receives us into his favour as righteous men. ... it consists in the remission of sins and the imputation of Christ's righteousness".⁷ Justification is therefore based on what Christ has done for us as our substitute: he perfectly fulfilled the righteousness which God required of us. We are reckoned righteous before God in Christ and apart from ourselves.⁸ Like Melancthon, Calvin understood justification in forensic terms. But it is wrong to describe such an understanding as a "legal fiction" because Calvin stressed the union with Christ into which we are brought through faith as the context in which these blessings become ours.

Furthermore, although justification and sanctification are to be distinguished, they must never be separated. We cannot have one without the other. Both spring from our union with Christ.

Why, then, are we justified by faith? Because by faith we grasp Christ's righteousness, by which alone we are reconciled to God. Yet you could not grasp this without at the same time grasping sanctification also. ... Therefore Christ justifies no one whom he does not at the same time sanctify.⁹

When we lay hold of Christ as the one by whom alone we can be justified, we lay hold of the one who begins at that moment to sanctify us as well.

Luther and Calvin and their theological traditions were distinguished by their affirmation that justification is by grace alone (*sola gratia*), through faith alone (*sola fide*), in Christ alone (*solo Christo*). We can contribute nothing to our justification: even our faith in Christ is not something which earns us God's grace, but the means by which we receive it, like holding out a hand to receive a gift. Whereas the Roman Catholic church has usually followed Augustine in teaching that we are justified (justification referring not only to the beginning of

⁶ Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, tr. F. L. Battles & ed. J. T. McNeill (Philadelphia, PA, 1960), 3.11.1.

⁷ *Institutes*, 3.11.2.

⁸ *Institutes*, 3.11.4.

⁹ *Institutes*, 3.16.1.

the Christian life but its continuance) on the basis of something within us, the Reformers taught that it takes place on the basis of something outside us – the righteousness of Christ. Lutherans in the seventeenth century even described it as “the article by which a church stands or falls” (*articulus stantis et cadentis ecclesiae*). However, Lutheran dogmatics also prepared the way for the Pietist movement to make conversion and sanctification rather than justification the focus of its teaching about salvation. The insistence that God justifies the *believing* sinner was taken to imply that faith is a precondition of salvation, rather than the means by which we lay hold of salvation. The danger was that faith could thus become a new kind of work – something which we do in order to merit justification. This trend towards an increasing emphasis on conversion was strengthened by the concern of many Pietists to react against what they regarded as dead Lutheran Orthodoxy, concerned only with objective belief at the expense of living faith. Indeed, many Pietists came to reject Lutheran teaching about Christ’s righteousness as being credited (imputed) to us, on the basis that such teaching could undermine the pursuit of holiness: if Christ has done everything for us as our substitute, they argued, what is there left for us to do?

Through John Wesley and others, Pietism helped to shape modern Evangelicalism. Wesley followed the Pietists in rejecting the idea of Christ’s righteousness being imputed to us, seeing our faith as being counted for righteousness. He also defined justification as pardon or forgiveness of sin, a definition which is far weaker than the understanding held by Luther and Calvin. This weakness has undoubtedly continued to affect evangelical thinking about salvation. What are its implications for spirituality?

The whole point about justification is that it is an act of God’s grace. Strictly speaking, we should talk of “justification by grace through faith alone”. Faith is not a work which we perform in order to gain justification, as if God had replaced the old requirements with a new one which was easier to fulfil (although some seventeenth-century Protestants and Anglicans did teach this), but the means whereby we are united with Christ. From that union flow all the blessings of the Christian life.

Justification and Christian assurance

Luther’s understanding of justification by faith meant that he believed that he had grounds for assurance of his spiritual standing. In the same way, a restored understanding of what it means to say that we are justified by faith alone could

have a major impact on many of our people. In spite of our preaching of assurance, it is probably true that many believers in our churches lack this. I myself grew up in a tradition strongly influenced by Puritanism, in which assurance was often lacking. In other traditions, believers may seek some particular experience as a means of assuring themselves that they are accepted by God. Alternatively, people may ground their assurance on having made a "decision" – and then wonder whether they did this in the right manner, or exercised enough faith. In that state of mind, they are vulnerable to false teachers, uncertain of their own standing and perhaps an inadequate demonstration to the world of God's transforming love in Christ. Still others are burdened with a sense of their own sinfulness. They have turned to Christ in repentance but remain unsure whether God has accepted them. We need to help our people to grasp the full significance of what Christ has done, and the standing which they have in Christ as a result. Remember that Paul loved to describe believers as being "in Christ". Individuals come to be "in Christ" as they turn to him from their sin in repentant faith. Being in Christ, his righteousness is theirs: they are accepted in him, and they are also being transformed into his likeness. Assurance is not based ultimately on any decision which we have made, nor on any experience in itself, but on the fact that God has acted in Christ to save sinful human beings. Our confidence is in him; as Paul reminds us (Romans 8:33), no charge against God's elect can stand, since it is God who justifies.

Justification and sanctification

The Reformers made a clear distinction between the event of justification and the process of sanctification, but they did not separate them. Both flow from our union with Christ through Spirit-given faith. We need to do the same. We are accepted by God because of our justification, not because of our sanctification. Paul says that we are justified by God's grace as a gift (Romans 3:24). This justification is perfect and complete, and we are already accepted by God. That being so, our future glorification is certain, and sanctification may be seen as both an outworking of our justification and a preparation for our glorification. In the New Testament, salvation has three tenses – we have been saved (justification), we are being saved (sanctification), and we will be saved (glorification). All belong together, and it is often difficult to separate them out when we read the New Testament.

Bearing in mind the connection between justification and sanctification helps us to guard against two opposite errors. On the one hand, since our justification is always the point at which our sanctification begins, we may fairly question the claims to spiritual experience made by those who assert that they have been justified but who are careless about growing in grace. The God who justifies us is the God who also undertakes to renew us, transforming us into the likeness of Christ. Salvation is far more than escaping Hell: it involves the whole of God's redeeming and renewing work, as he undoes the effects of sin. On the other hand, we must not fall into the trap of thinking that because we are as yet imperfectly sanctified and we still struggle against indwelling sin, our acceptance with God is uncertain. This was the approach adopted by the Roman Catholic Council of Trent in its "Decree on Justification" (1546), but it rests on a misunderstanding of Protestant teaching about salvation.

Finally, we should note that although the idea of a union with Christ by faith had been taught by the early Luther, it was lost by Melancthon and later Lutherans. This is important because it was the exchange of letters between later Lutheran theologians and the Patriarch of Constantinople between 1573 and 1581 which is seen by many Orthodox as laying down the agenda for discussions with the Protestant confessions. The loss of this doctrine meant the loss of what could have been a fruitful issue for discussion, as recent Lutheran-Orthodox dialogue in Finland has recognized. Future dialogue between Orthodox and Evangelicals should examine the relationship between justification, sanctification and union with Christ. Indeed, it would be of real value for the spiritual life of many congregations to receive clear teaching on these doctrines from their pastors.

Justification and good works

For the Reformers, the believer is "at once justified and a sinner". Yet they never taught that good works are unimportant. Good works do not contribute to our acceptance by God, but they are evidence that we have come to know God. In Calvin's words, "faith alone saves, but the faith which saves is never alone." Luther described faith as "a living, busy, active, mighty thing ... So it is impossible that it should not do good."¹⁰

The Reformers agreed that we do good works because we are justified, not

¹⁰ *Luther's Works*, 35.370.

in order to be justified. Indeed, doing good works in order to be justified has a selfish aspect to it, because we may serve others for our benefit rather than theirs. Luther considered that justification by faith frees us to love others for their own sake, rather than as a means of achieving our own salvation. In other words, knowing that we have been justified frees us to give ourselves in love to others, in imitation of Christ who gave himself for us.

Yet in encouraging our members to good works and involvement in church activities, we must take great care. The danger is that we may place so much emphasis on human effort and commitment that people fall into the trap of thinking that these are what make them acceptable to God. The result may be legalism, complacency, or a sense of failure, none of which commend the gospel. We must always stress that we do good works because we are accepted, not in order to be accepted – and that applies to our relationship with other believers just as it does to our relationship with God. They are the fruit of being “in Christ”.

Justification and the gospel

How do we preach the gospel? People around us suffer from many problems – loneliness, alienation, insecurity, lack of purpose in life, to name just a few. It is absolutely true that the fundamental answer to these problems comes from entering a personal relationship with God. But we must never forget to explain why that relationship had been broken in the first place – because of human sin. Sin has affected every aspect of our make-up as human beings, so that of ourselves we cannot, and will not, turn to God.

Justification has lost its importance for many in the West; Evangelicals have often focused on the human act of deciding to follow Christ, and we have lost sight of the greatness of what God has done for us. Now, if justification by faith is not an important part of our spirituality, then we will not miss it if we give it up. As I said at the beginning, I cannot help thinking that this is one reason why a number of Western Evangelicals have found it possible to convert to Orthodoxy. Whatever else they may gain as a result (and one may argue that *some* Orthodox congregations display more evidence of a Scriptural model of church life than *some* Evangelical congregations), surely this is a great loss, for it expresses something which is foundational to the enjoyment of a transforming personal relationship with God.

As I hinted earlier, in spite of the use of legal language by both Paul and the

Reformers, we cannot accept the misrepresentation which regards the doctrine of justification by faith alone as impersonal, mechanical and legalistic. As well as the "court room" language, we find the Reformers using the language of personal relationship: in Christ, God in his love brings about the restoration of the relationship with him which we were made to enjoy and which was broken by our sin. As Cranfield puts it,

Whereas between a human judge and an accused person there may be no really deep personal relationship at all, the relation between God and the sinner is altogether personal, both because God is the God He is and also because it is against God Himself that the sinner has sinned. ... He does not confer the status of righteousness upon us without at the same time giving Himself to us in friendship and establishing peace between Himself and us...¹¹

It is as we are united with Christ that we are counted as righteous, because we participate in his righteousness. So the doctrine of justification by faith alone reminds us that our salvation is rooted in God's love as well as his holiness. And God delights in those who are united with Christ, just as he delights in Christ himself.

Justification and the Church

N. T. Wright has suggested that justification belongs under the heading of ecclesiology rather than soteriology.¹² I do not believe that he is correct, but undoubtedly the doctrine of justification has profound implications for our understanding of the nature of the church. Justification is an act of God in which he settles the issue of our status before him as individuals and sets us in a particular community, that of his people – but the latter is dependent upon the former. Baptism likewise represents both our declaration of a clear conscience towards God as a result of what Christ has done, and our entrance into the church.

The practical significance of justification for our understanding of ecclesiology is this: if we have been accepted by God as an act of his grace, we are called to accept others in the same way (Rom. 15.7). The church is called to be an accepting community, welcoming all who believe in Christ, not merely

¹¹ C. E. B. Cranfield, *Romans* (Edinburgh, 1980), 1.256, 258 (on Rom. 5:1).

¹² N. T. Wright, *What Saint Paul Really Said* (Oxford, 1997), 119.

those who are Baptists or who have an acceptable church background and upbringing – there is no room for exclusiveness or pride. If we are "in Christ", then we are one with all who are "in Christ", and we are called to make that visible in our church life.

Justification and dialogue between Christian traditions

The sixteenth-century Anglican Richard Hooker was certain that many thousands were saved without ever hearing of the doctrine of justification by faith: they were justified by God on the basis of the work of Christ, not by their belief in justification by faith. In his "Sermon on Justification", he asserted that "God doth justify the believing man, yet not for the worthiness of his belief, but for his worthiness which is believed..."¹³ In some circumstances, therefore, we may be able to carry on dialogue concerning justification as a conversation *within* the Christian community, rather than a conversation between Christians and non-Christians. A "meta-theological rule" has been suggested, that our teaching and practice should promote reliance upon the God and Father of Jesus Christ alone for salvation¹⁴ Where we see those of other Christian traditions who love and trust in Christ in this way, I believe we may treat them as brethren, even though we may have serious disagreements with their teaching. Along these lines, Wright has recently suggested that justification is an ecumenical doctrine, because it teaches that everyone who believes in Christ, whatever their church allegiance, is accepted as part of the people of God.

Dialogue between different Christian traditions has increased greatly in recent decades. The doctrine of justification by faith alone must form a major part of dialogue of Evangelicals with Roman Catholics and Orthodox. However, before much meaningful debate can take place, we need to explain clearly what the doctrine does and does not mean. For example, we shall need to counter the charge that those who are justified are free to sin, demonstrating that saving faith is always accompanied by a desire to grow in holiness because through such faith we are united with Christ by the Holy Spirit. This dialogue will need to take account of previous attempts in this area, such as the Colloquy of Regensburg/Ratisbon (1541) or the correspondence between Lutheran

¹³ *Works* (Oxford, 1840), 2.646.

¹⁴ William G. Rusch, in *Justification by Faith: Lutherans and Catholics in Dialogue VII* (Minneapolis, 1985), 133.

theologians and Patriarch Jeremias II of Constantinople (1573-81). Yet both Roman Catholicism and Orthodoxy have moved on in the last four centuries, and it will be wise to avoid conducting the discussion in sixteenth-century terms.

Conclusion

Like Barth, I do not believe that justification by faith alone is the central doctrine of the Christian faith (can we class any one doctrine as central?); neither do I believe that we must necessarily maintain the truth which it expresses by using all the sixteenth-century terminology, though in many Evangelical churches a little more of that would not go amiss, especially as the Reformers were seeking to do justice to the meaning and implications of the Biblical terminology. But the truth which this doctrine enshrines – that we are accepted by God as an act of his grace towards us, and that he does so in a way which enables him to demonstrate his perfect righteousness – is at the heart of understanding how that faith becomes ours. Let us understand it faithfully, proclaim it clearly, and live it joyfully – and with the Reformers we say, *solī Deo gloria* – “to God alone be the glory”.¹⁵

¹⁵ An expanded version of a lecture delivered to the Centre for Reformation Studies, Oradea, Romania, 25th of October 2000.

THE CROSS, SUFFERING, AND ASSURANCE: FUNDAMENTAL INSIGHTS FROM THE REFORMATION

Carl R. Trueman

Introduction

It is a great privilege to speak here tonight on the theology of the Reformation before a company of people who love and serve the Lord Jesus Christ for it was, I believe, at the Reformation that the gospel was clarified and defined in a way that it had not been so before. That is not to say that there had been no gospel before Luther and company came on to the scene – far from it – but it is to say that something of the biblical message was recaptured at the Reformation which helped to revitalise the church and which, to the extent that it reflects the heart of God as revealed in the heart of the Bible, cannot be abandoned by the church without a great loss to its life and worship. This is why the project you are undertaking here, to set up a Centre for Reformation Studies, is of such importance. An Evangelical church that ignores or disparages the Reformation is ultimately a church that lacks that which gives it much of its historical and theological identity; furthermore, it is a church that robs its people of some of the richest insights into the Christian life that the history of the church has to offer. For these reasons, if for no other, a knowledge of the Reformation is of vital importance. It is with this in mind that I was delighted to be able to accept the invitation to speak tonight, particularly as my instructions were to teach something about the Reformation with particular reference to the lessons which it can teach the church today.

It was with this in mind that I chose tonight's topic, The Cross, Suffering, and Assurance. I am, of course, acutely aware of the fact that I come from a country that has enjoyed religious freedom for baptists for a good deal of the last 150 years; and before that, the social and political persecution, frequently ignored in a church history generally written by members of the established Church of England, was not on a scale to compare with the suffering, political,

social, and economic, of Christians in Romania. I hope, however, that hat I am to say will not appear presumptuous – as will become clear by the end of my paper, I have a twofold purpose here: to offer comfort to those who have suffered persecution, but also to give a rebuke to churches, such as my own, which have, so to speak, lived at ease in Zion for too long. This, I hope you will agree, is the great thing about Luther's insights into the biblical message – indeed, it is the great thing about the biblical message itself: it is universally applicable to all people in all places at all times. For the rich and complacent, it offers rebuke; for the poor and needy, words of comfort and hope. And no-one saw this more clearly or expressed it with greater biblical precision than my chosen subject tonight, Martin Luther, the humble German monk, whose writings and thought did so much to shape the Reformation and indeed the whole of Protestant Christianity.

Martin Luther and the Heidelberg Disputation

In April 1518, the chapter meeting of Augustinian Order, held in the city of Heidelberg, gave the young monk, Martin Luther, his first public chance to expound his new theology in public since the crisis over indulgences had broken late in the previous year. It is, of course, ironic that the issues raised in the document which sparked that crisis, the Ninety Five Theses Against Indulgences, were far from radical and scarcely expounded a theology which struck at the very foundations of the dogma of the pope. Indeed, the fury surrounding the indulgence crisis derived less from its theological radicalism and more from the damage it was doing to Albert of Brandenburg's finances. Nevertheless, as time was to show, what started as an attempt to correct what Luther saw as an abusive practice was to escalate within a few years to a wholesale shaking of the foundations of contemporary theology.

The first shot in this theological battle had been fired by Luther some months before he took up the issue of indulgences when he had publicly attacked the prevalent theological method of the medieval church in his *Disputation Against Scholastic Theology*. This work, criticising as it did the use of Aristotle in theology, struck much harder and much deeper at the intellectual framework of Catholic theology than anything in the Theses against Indulgences and, if one were to date the start of the theological Reformation, one could do worse than to locate it at this earlier disputation when, in retrospect, we can see many of the themes of Luther's mature Reformation

theology laid out in an embryonic but nonetheless decisive form.

If the *Disputation Against Scholastic Theology* marked the beginning of the public expression of a truly radical theology, and the *Theses Against Indulgences* almost accidentally launched Luther onto the national, if not the international, ecclesiastical stage, the Heidelberg Disputation brought the two together. Here, Luther was able to use the public platform which his notoriety on the indulgence issue had brought him to develop within the public arena the radical theology which underlay his attack on scholasticism. The opportunity was not missed: what Luther did here was to propose not only a new way of doing theology but a completely new way of understanding who God is and how he acts.

While the majority of the Heidelberg theses are taken up with specific attacks on medieval theology, the heart of Luther's position is contained in Theses 19, 20, 21, and 22 which read as follows:

19. The one who beholds what is invisible of God, through the perception of what is made, is not rightly called a theologian.
20. But rather the one who perceives what is visible of God, God's "backside" by beholding the sufferings and the cross.
21. The "theologian of glory" calls the bad good and the good bad. The "theologian of the cross" says what a thing is.
22. The wisdom that beholds the invisible things of God as perceived from works, puffs up, blinds, and hardens man altogether.

The meaning of the theses is perhaps not self-evident; but when they are set against the background of Luther's intellectual development since ca. 1513, the implications of what he is saying will become clear. Luther's spiritual biography is, of course, well known and so I will only give the barest of outlines at this point. His problem as a young monk had been that of assurance, frequently summarised by scholars in the phrase "Where can I find a gracious God?" Luther himself tells us that he had been taught by his medieval masters to understand God's righteousness as an objective standard to which he needed to conform in order for God to be propitious towards him. This had led him to despair: the more he had tried to be righteous, the less righteous he had felt himself to be; his own efforts at pleasing God through good works only led him to a deeper understanding of his own sinfulness and unworthiness to stand before God. The breakthrough came when he realised that the righteousness of God was not an objective standard to which he had to conform, but a gift of

God, grasped by faith, whereby the believer is made righteous by God's grace, not human effort. In time, he came to identify this with the righteousness of Christ imputed, rather than imparted, to the believer, and hence the great Reformation doctrine of justification by grace through faith was launched upon an unsuspecting church.

So much is well-known, but fully to understand the nature of Luther's breakthrough, and thus to see the importance of the references to the theology of the cross in the Heidelberg Disputation, we must dig deeper in Luther's theology and ask not simply how his understanding of salvation changed but also – and this is the real point at issue in Luther's Reformation theology – how his understanding of God himself had changed. When we look at Luther's Reformation breakthrough with this question in mind, it becomes clear that we do not simply have here a change in the understanding of how sinful human beings can stand before a righteous God, but a change in the very understanding of who God himself is.

For the young Luther, God was the one who deals with humanity in the way in which humans expect him so to do. Hence, God's righteousness was assumed to be an objective standard: for human beings, justice and righteousness are functions of desert – to deal righteously with someone is to give them the treatment which they deserve. Thus, talk of God's righteousness was to be, for the young Luther in accordance with his medieval training, understood in a manner analogous to that of humans. God's righteousness was, of course, infinitely perfect, but it could be understood abstractly along the same lines as human righteousness. In this way, a theology was produced where human reason, steeped in the thought of Aristotle, was allowed to define the theological terms which were then applied to God, albeit in an infinite manner. The result, theologically, was a God who behaved in a remarkably human, albeit infinitely perfect, manner. The result, existentially, was a God whose standards were always too high for a sinful human being to satisfy and yet who offered no help to the tormented soul incapable of placating him.

It is this kind of theology to which Luther refers when he speaks of the theology of glory in the Heidelberg Disputation – that is, it is a theology in which man accords himself the greatest glory possible: he makes God in his own image rather than vice versa. And it was the antithesis of this theology, the theology of the cross, which Luther now proposes as the only true theology.

The theology of the cross is exactly what the name suggests: a theology

which takes the cross as its starting point. Instead of building our theology on the basis of our own rational expectations of who God is and how he should behave, and instead of defining our theological terms on the basis of human reason and understanding, Luther proposes that the starting point for all theology should be God's own revelation of himself on the cross. Only when the theologian looks to where God has given himself to be seen can he truly grasp who God is and how he acts. For Luther, this revelation occurs supremely on the cross at Calvary; thus, all theology should be cross-centred and developed with reference to what is revealed there; the cross is therefore not just the starting point for theology but also the very thing that shapes and defines the whole of theology.

The Theology of the Cross: Redefining God

According to Luther, picking up on the Pauline idea of the cross as foolishness to Greeks, the cross is a flat contradiction of what human beings expect God to be like. The anthropomorphic God of human invention behaves, as we noted above, like humanity writ large. His power is like the power of an earthly ruler expanded to an infinite degree. His holiness is like the holiness of the upright citizen multiplied beyond measure. His wisdom is like that of the most profound intellectual extended indefinitely. The God on the cross, however, is the precise opposite of all these things: his power is demonstrated through the weakness inherent in his submission to the authorities and his helpless death; his holiness is that expressed through the sinner's curse of hanging upon a tree; his wisdom is shown in the utter folly of dying such a terrible death when he has the power to call down a legion of angels to rescue him; and his love is shown not in the reciprocation of affection but in total self-surrender and submission to those who hate him. In other words, the God of the cross is the precise opposite in every way to the God of glory as imagined by the godless.

What we have in the theology of the cross, then, is not simply a modification to the contemporary theology with which Luther disagreed but a total rejection of that theology. The very definitions of terms such as holiness, power, wisdom and love are turned on their heads, according to Luther, in the light of the cross at Calvary. The very grammar and syntax of theology have been utterly transformed and it is not too much to say that the God of the cross and the God of glory are in fact two different Gods with nothing at all in common. The one is the revealed God of the Bible, the other an imaginary idol

invented by human pride. Luther's reformation breakthrough on this point, then, strikes not just at the accepted theological methodology of the day but also at the very identity of who God himself is.

The Theology of the Cross: the Eyes of Faith

The theology of the cross, however, is not something that is open for all to see: the empirical data of the cross are not obvious indicators of what is going on there and who is being revealed. To the eyes of the rational man or woman, it would appear that the figure hanging on the cross is not powerful, not holy (for cursed is he who hangs on a tree) nor particularly wise. The truth of the cross is thus deeply hidden under the signs of outward defeat, affliction and suffering. True theology, therefore – and this is a very important point with implications for Christian experience, assurance, and behaviour – true theology, therefore, is not an empirical science open to rational investigation. No – the truth of the cross, the revelation of God, is well and truly hidden under the outward, empirical phenomena.

Hiddenness is, of course, a commonplace of Luther's theology. Pre-eminently, it is used to refer to the incarnation: Christ's deity is hidden in his humanity. It also occurs in his discussion of the Lord's Supper: Christ's presence is hidden in, with and under the elements of bread and wine. In both cases, empirical analysis will not lead anyone to the deeper truth. If it had been possible to dissect Christ's body after his death, no divinity would have been found tucked away on the inside; and cutting open the bread or filtering the wine at communion will yield material evidence of nothing but flour, yeast and fermented grape juice. The same is true on the cross: the divinity of Christ is hidden there – perhaps, if one can use the phrase meaningfully, more fully hidden there and then than at any other point in his life; moreover, the purpose of God, that which he is trying to achieve is hidden from the eyes of reason under the means he is using to achieve it. No-one can see the deity of Christ in the humanity, nor the victory of God in the defeat of Christ – no-one, that is, except the one with the eyes of faith.

It is here, indeed, that faith comes into its own. For Luther, the cross should not be looked at with the eyes of reason, for reason's preconceptions will never accept that God is doing there what he is in fact doing. Instead, one must look at the cross with the eyes of faith. Faith, in its very essence, does not prescribe how God should behave but rather looks to see how God does in fact behave. In

other words, faith lets God be God. It does not seek to fit him into its own pre-ordained pattern of who God is and what he does; it rather accepts that he is and does what he has shown himself to be and to do.

The Theology of the Cross: God's Proper Work through his Alien Work

When faith looks to the cross and sees God there, mighty in his weakness, victorious in his defeat, holy through being cursed, it learns a profound lesson with implications well beyond the physical cross at Calvary: that God achieves his proper work through his alien work. What this means is that God achieves what he intends through doing the precise opposite of what we expect. In the case of Calvary, he defeats sin by appearing to be overcome by evil; he establishes himself as ruler over all by submitting himself to the powers of earth; he demonstrates his might and wisdom by behaving in (humanly speaking) a weak and foolish way. The cross thus redefines not only who God is but how he acts towards his creation.

This point is of central importance to Luther's theology as a whole, for the cross becomes a paradigm for God's behaviour which is to be the basic criterion by which God's actions, and human experience of God, are to be judged. In addition, it also becomes the pattern of Christian service for believers with reference to those people with whom they come into contact.

We shall explore these issues below – and it is my belief that Luther's insights into the New Testament teaching on the cross here have profound and important lessons to teach the church today. What we should note in the first place, however, is how this revolutionary way of thinking about God solved Luther's immediate problem of how to find a God who would be gracious to him. The answer is simple: the anthropomorphic God of the early Luther could never be gracious – he demanded that Luther make himself righteous in order to merit grace; that is, after all, precisely what a human being would require, so it is reasonable to assume that God's standards are no less rigorous. But the God of the cross, the God who does the precise opposite of what is expected, can be gracious: he is gracious because he himself has stood in the place of sinners and died on the cross in order that he might freely receive sinners to himself even without them being righteous. Indeed – and how remarkable and unexpected this must have been for the tormented Luther – he is gracious to sinners precisely in their unrighteousness. A stupid doctrine, an idiotic doctrine – but, for Luther, the doctrine of the cross – foolishness to the Greeks and to the

worldly wise, and offence to the Jews and those confident of their own righteousness, but to those of faith, the power of God to salvation.

For Luther, the principle that God achieves his proper work through his alien work has a wider reference than simply the cross at Calvary. In one respect, of course, the cross was unique – the death of Christ, by virtue of who he was, made the act of God on Calvary an event that was different in kind from any other. Thus, the significance of the cross as the saving act of God in Christ cannot be replicated by anyone else at any other time or in any other place. Nevertheless, the event of the cross can – and indeed should – be repeated on a daily basis in the life of the church and of individuals. As a paradigm of how God deals with his people in order to achieve his purposes, the cross has continuing and universal significance.

Thus, when the believer suffers in this life, Luther would argue that this is because God achieves his ultimate purpose – the bringing of the believer to glory – through doing the precise opposite of what the believer expects. Thus, sufferings, curses, and even damnation in the eyes of the world are the stuff of which the normal Christian life should consist. When confronted by inexplicable suffering, Luther argued that the believer should not curse God or question him – for a start, the path of inexplicable suffering and hardship was the path Christ trod to the cross, and so should believers expect their path to be any different or any easier. Furthermore, if God achieves his proper work through his alien work, then it is absolutely necessary that the Christian suffer, for if he or she does not suffer, they can have little confidence that God is actually achieving that proper work. Suffering is, for Luther, a hallmark of the authentic Christian life – in fact, it is of the essence of the Christian life. That is why he says that one becomes a theologian not by studying and filling one's head with knowledge but by being cursed, damned and cast into hell – it is the *experience* of God through his alien work that establishes one's Christian credentials, and it is through this experience that one truly comes to know God.

The implications of this position for Luther's theology thus go well beyond the cross at Calvary. What he is saying is that questions concerning the suffering of the believer and concerning the believer's assurance of salvation cannot be answered without reference to the cross. In the former case, that of suffering, the issue is not one of why God allows suffering but whether the believer has the right to expect an experience of life which is any different to that of the Saviour. Put bluntly, if suffering was good enough for Christ, it is good enough for the

Christian. In addition, the ethical implications of this should not be ignored. Much modern New Testament scholarship has set itself in conscious reaction against what it argues is Luther's individualistic approach to salvation which construes the issue solely in terms of the believer's relation to God. To anyone who has actually read Luther for themselves, such a portrait seems to have been painted entirely without the scholars concerned bothering to look at their subject, to see if their picture bears any resemblance whatsoever to the original. In fact, Luther's understanding of the cross is anything but individualistic: it is because Christ suffered on behalf of us that we are now called to suffer, and if necessary give our lives, for the service of our fellow men and women. The theologian of the cross accepts suffering as his or her lot – and accepts that this suffering will often be on behalf of others, many of whom could not care less about it. Such was the path of Christ; such is the calling of those who seek to follow him.

As to the second issue, that of assurance, Luther's theology of the cross effectively solved this problem for him. At the theological level, it demonstrated to him that another had stood in his place and had died for his sin – salvation was his as a gift, based on the objective and unilateral work of God; at the experiential level, with its emphasis upon suffering as of the essence of the Christian life, and upon God's proper purpose always being achieved through his alien work, the theology of the cross indicates to the believer that empirical experience is no guide to status before God. For Luther, it is precisely when the believer is suffering, persecuted by fellow men, abandoned by friends, overwhelmed with sin that he or she is, paradoxically, most likely to be standing in a proper relation to God. It is, as Luther would say, when we feel that God has totally deserted us, and when we have nothing but Christ to cling to, that God in Christ is thus at his closest to us.

These insights, of course, were not the sole preserve of Luther's reformation. Indeed, Luther's thinking on this point made a profound impression on John Calvin, the great French Reformer of Geneva, a man whose theology was developed under conditions of exile from his homeland and always with the condition of those suffering in his homeland in mind. In his little book of 1550, *Concerning Scandals*, Calvin locates the basic intellectual, moral and experiential scandal of Christianity in the cross and death of Christ:

For the fact that the Son of God, who is life eternal, is declared to have put on our flesh and to have been a mortal man, the fact that we are said to have

procured life by his death, righteousness by his condemnation, salvation by the curse he bore – all that is so greatly out of step with the common outlook of men that the more intelligent a man is the quicker he will be in repudiating it... People are also greatly offended by the severity of the demands for the denial of ourselves, the crucifying of the old man, contempt for the world, embracing of the cross. But even today experience itself is far more harsh when faith is put to the test by persecutions and other hardships.¹

Elsewhere in the same work, Calvin points to the fact that God's glory has been shown most effectively at times when the church has been most crushed by persecution and then raised up purely by God's power.² Indeed, Calvin even locates the glory of the church in its sufferings, whereby it mirrors those sufferings that are the glory of Christ.³ In this connection, such sufferings and persecutions also serve to subjugate the old man within the individual and thus form part of the process of Christian sanctification.⁴ In all of this, Calvin's thinking mirrors that of Luther: both men suffered in their different ways for the gospel and thus both saw through their reading of the Bible and their experience of the Christian life that the cross is central to all aspects of Christianity. The Reformation, then, in one respect marks the return of the cross to the central place which it should always occupy in any theology worthy of the name Christian.

A Pauline Insight

I said at the start of this paper that the Reformers are of use to us today, and indeed only of use to us today, to the extent that they enable us to see more deeply and more clearly into the heart of the biblical message. This is what I believe Luther is doing when he articulates his theology of the cross. What he was doing here was bringing to bear upon his own contemporary theological situation the insights into God and his activity which Paul develops in the first chapter of his first letter to the Corinthians. There, Paul confronts a church which had allowed its expectations concerning what constituted an appropriate style of leadership to be determined by the standards of the world around them.

¹ *Concerning Scandals*, 12-13.

² "[T]he more the Church has been crushed beneath the cross, the more clearly has the power of God shown itself in raising it up again." *Concerning Scandals*, 40.

³ *Concerning Scandals*, 47.

⁴ *Concerning Scandals*, 47.

In contrast to these worldly standards of what constitutes strong leadership, Paul sets the foolishness and weakness of the cross:

Where is the wise man? Where is the scholar? Where is the philosopher of this age? For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe. Jews demand miraculous signs and Greeks look for wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. For the foolishness of God is wiser than man's wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than man's strength. (1 Cor 1:20-25)

Thus, when Luther stresses the cross both as the centre of the Christian message and as the contradiction of all human criteria for who God is and how he should behave, he is doing little more than echoing the apostle Paul.

To regain the Reformation, then, is for the modern church to regain the message of the cross as Paul and Luther and Calvin understood it. Much modern Evangelical preaching has focused – and rightly so – upon Christ's death as a substitution for sinners; to do this is, I believe, not unbiblical or wrong – in fact, it is essential if the good news is to be preached. Nevertheless, this emphasis upon substitutionary atonement should not be allowed to squeeze out other, equally important, aspects of the Pauline understanding of the cross. It is in these other aspects that some of the cross's most powerful lessons for today are to be found.

For Western churches, there is a profound lesson here. A church that does not suffer persecution must surely ask itself why this is so. It may be for entirely laudable reasons, such as pertain at points in history when God seems to be peculiarly at work. However, the biblical teaching of the cross would seem to indicate that such periods of ease, both on a personal and a corporate level, are to be the exception rather than the rule. The reason for ease is more likely to be that the church itself has lost its distinctive edge as that which is to build its life on the cross, with all its accompanying foolishness and offence. Indeed, the signs of this are all around in western Christendom: the obsession with management techniques as the way forward for church building, as symbolised by the increasing emphasis in seminary education on presentational and organisational skills rather than theology, study, and personal devotional formation; the emphasis in the wider church culture upon the conversion of

celebrities and the famous, rather than an acknowledgement that God's bias, if one can phrase it in such a way, is clearly to the poor and the despised things of this world; and the presentation of Christianity as the answer to a whole world of personal problems, from self-image to losing weight, rather than as a coming to terms with human sin and God's righteousness. Perhaps such a cross-less Christianity reaches its apex – or, perhaps better, its nadir – in the health, wealth and happiness gospel of those who promote the prosperity doctrines so popular in certain circles. For such groups, the cross as understood by Paul, Luther, and Calvin has no place: that God should achieve his proper work through the alien work of suffering, victory through defeat, life through death is truly foolish and offensive to such people – a position which surely indicates precisely how Christian such movements really are. Nevertheless, my own fear for the church in the West is that many of us buy into the prosperity doctrine without really realising it: we enjoy our creature comforts and find ourselves outraged at even the smallest inconvenience or discomfiting circumstance. Yet is that attitude itself not a fundamental rejection of the deepest lessons of Christ's cross, those which concern the kind of life and treatment which the Christian can expect as part of the normal Christian pilgrimage. The cross is simply incompatible with the methods and expectations of an affluent, consumer-driven society. The West needs to rethink its church life not in terms of management theory, technique, and catering to the perceived needs of its members but in terms of the cross: such a rethinking must inevitably entail some hard questions concerning why it is that the church in places like Britain is not so much tolerated as completely ignored, an object not so much of derision as of complete indifference to most people. If it were placing the cross at the centre of its testimony, surely both its intellectual and, perhaps even more so, its moral offence must inevitably provoke a reaction. One thing that Paul does not say is that the cross can be a matter of indifference; it can only ever be a matter of offence to those who do not believe. Thus, a cross that is a matter of indifference is simply not the cross of Christ. But then I hope that this rediscovery of the cross at the Reformation, while a clear rebuke to the church in the West, will yet prove to be a source of strength and comfort to those in places such as Romania where suffering is not something to which the church is a stranger. Suffering is a mark of the cross and the mark of a cross-centred Christianity. Those who suffer persecution have every right to see in their suffering a sign that God is working his proper purpose out within them through his alien work, as he did with his own Son. As

I say these things, I am conscious that I speak as one who has never suffered in any meaningful way for my faith – indeed, I stand under the general censure which I have outlined against churches in the West – but Balaam’s ass spoke relevant words despite being only an ass; and the lesson of the cross, as emphasised by Paul, Luther, and Calvin, is the lesson of the cross no matter who happens to speak it out. There is then, great comfort for you here. As Luther would argue, when Christians suffer physically for their faith, or, indeed, when they suffer psychologically for their faith, they are not to base their assurance of God’s favour on their outward circumstances, for such often stand as contradictions of the true state of affairs; they are rather to base their confidence and their joy upon what Christ accomplished for them on the cross and through his resurrection, and to see in their own outward discomforts a sure sign that they have been called to live lives centred on the cross in much the same way as Christ himself did.

Finally, the message of the cross, as Luther understood it, is urgently needed in the Europe of today. Indeed, what greater message could there be for Christians in situations of conflict and hatred: the path of Christ and of the Christian is not to be one of violence and resistance, but one of self-giving and self-sacrifice to those who hate, despise and persecute them. That is the message which Luther sees in the cross and which has, I believe a profound relevance and urgency at the current time, when Europe is once again witnessing ethnic conflicts and hatreds which all too often claim some kind of religious ideology as their basis. For Luther, the Christian is first and foremost a person of the cross, not Bosnian or Serbian, not Irish or British, and that cross effectively removes ethnic boundaries as bases for conflict or hatred. The Christian is one who is to strive to follow in the footprints of the Master and to give him or herself unconditionally to those who hate and curse them. That is the mark of the true disciple, and is one which, far from leading to the individualistic pietism some impute to the theology of Luther, is a means of showing forth God’s glory, and the saving power of the gospel – a gospel which will still be foolishness to Greeks, but which is the power of God to those who are being saved.

THE REFORMATION ROOTS OF THE BAPTIST TRADITION

Timothy George

The Reformation of the sixteenth century was a tremendous movement of spiritual and ecclesial renewal which occurred at the critical juncture between the waning of the Middle Ages and the dawn of modern times. Contributing as it did to this basic shift in Western consciousness, the Reformation also signalled a fundamental reorientation in Christian theology. Luther's discovery of justification by faith alone, Zwingli's insistence on the clarity and certainty of Holy Scripture, Calvin's emphasis on the glory and sovereignty of God, and the Anabaptist quest for a true visible church all found expression in numerous new confessions, commentaries, liturgies, hymns, martyrologies, and church orders.

The impact of the Reformation, however, was not confined to the first generation of hearers who responded to the reformers' message. Like a great earthquake which continues to generate seismic aftereffects, the Reformation set in motion a revolution in religious life the effects of which were being felt well into the next century.

Baptists and the Reformation Heritage

Nowhere was this truer than in England, where the Reformation had begun, at least officially, as an act of state. By the time of Queen Elizabeth, there had arisen a party (first called "puritans" in the 1560s) which called for a further reformation of the Church of England. These "precise" believers, the "hotter sort of Protestants," as they were dubbed, disliked the prayer book of the established church and opposed the wearing of vestments by the clergy.¹ Some called for radical changes in church polity, and all insisted on a lively preaching ministry. Some Puritans, disillusioned with the slow pace of change, turned Separatist.

¹ See Patrick Collinson, *The Elizabethan Puritan Movement* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), 22-28. Cf. also Basil Hall, "Puritanism: the Problem of Definition," *Studies in Church History*, 2 (1965), 283-296.

Like Robert Browne they were determined to effect a "Reformation without tarying for anie."²

Out of this ferment the Baptist tradition as we know it today emerged in the early seventeenth century. Modern historians have isolated two separable beginnings of the English Baptist movement: the General Baptists, who evolved out of the church planted by Thomas Helvrys at Spitalfields near London in 1612, which was an offshoot of the rebaptized exiled congregation of John Smyth; and the Particular Baptists, who arose among the underground London congregations of the 1630s. The General Baptists stressed the universal scope of the atonement, holding with the Dutch theologian Jacobus Arminius that Christ died for all persons. The Particular Baptists, on the other hand, were strict Calvinists who were in basic agreement with the five heads of doctrine propounded by the Synod of Dort (1618-19).³

How are Baptists related to the heritage of the Reformation? This question has proved difficult to answer for at least three reasons. First, the early English Baptists did not conform to any set typology of religious groupings, as Ernst Troeltsch discovered when he tried to fit them into his church-type/sect-type schema. On the one hand, he found strong affinities with the Continental Anabaptist tradition including believer's baptism, voluntary church membership, and the requirements of moral discipline. Yet, he concluded, "on account of their historic origin and their permanent environment, they became strongly impregnated with the spirit of Calvinism."⁴

Furthermore, the diverse strands in Baptist life make it difficult to speak univocally about appropriations of the Reformation tradition. In the seventeenth century, the Particular Baptists, who were more numerous, better educated, and more influential than the Generals, identified more closely with the mainline

² Browne published *A Treatise of Reformation without Tarying for Anie* in 1581. On Browne's significance for Separatist ecclesiology, see Timothy George, *John Robinson and the English Separatist Tradition* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1981), 33-44.

³ Older historians tended to blur the distinct origins of the two Baptist streams. Thus John Marsham wrote, "They early fell into contention upon points of doctrine and split in 1611, into two great parties, called the particular and the general Baptists." *An Epitome of General Ecclesiastical History* (New York: J. Tilden and Co., 1847), p. 408. More accurate reconstructions are given in H. Leon McBeth, *The Baptist Heritage* (Nashville: Broadman, 1987), 21-63, and B. R. White, *The English Baptists of the Seventeenth Century* (London: Baptist Historical Society, 1983).

⁴ Ernst Troeltsch, *The Social Teachings of the Christian Church* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976; originally published in German in 1911), 2:707.

Protestant traditions while the Generals, who were more open to sectarian influences, betrayed a genuine kinship with the Radical Reformation. Similar inclinations were reincarnated in the struggle between the two most noted English Baptists of the nineteenth century, Charles Haddon Spurgeon and John Clifford.

In addition, the modern obsession with denominational origins has clouded the deep continuities which place Baptists within the mainstream of Christian history. Christopher Hill has bluntly evaluated the method which has characterized much of traditional Baptist historiography: "There seems to me sometimes to be as much fiction and unwarranted assumption-and sheer waste of time-in tracing the genealogy of sects as of individuals."⁵ In successionist interpretations of Baptist history, the Reformation was essentially a hunting ground for the "missing link" between contemporary Baptists and their ancient forbears.⁶ More recently, historians have labored with refined methodology to prove-or disprove-specific Anabaptist influence on the earliest English Baptists. While such research is not to be gainsaid, it has frequently missed the forest for the trees.⁷

These concerns notwithstanding, the thesis of this essay is that Baptists, along with other Protestants, are indeed heirs of the Reformation. Of course, they are not, nor have they ever been, mere clones of Luther, Calvin, Zwingli, or anyone else. For Baptists the great doctrines of the Reformation were refracted through the prism of persecution and dissent which informed their intense advocacy of religious liberty and the separation of church and state. Baptists are duly proud of these and other denominational distinctives and yet, at their best, they have also recognized the common ground which they share with other

⁵ Christopher Hill, *Economic Problems of the Church* (London: Oxford University Press, 1956), xii.

⁶ See W. Morgan Patterson, *Baptist Successionism: A Critical View* (Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1969). Two classic successionist histories are: G. W. Orchard, *A Concise History of Foreign Baptists* (London: George Wightman, 1838), and John T. Christian, *A History of the Baptists* (Texarkana: Bogard Press, 1922).

⁷ There is an extensive literature on this subject including the following contributions: W. S. Hudson, "Baptists Were Not Anabaptists", *The Chronicle*, 16 (1953), 171-179; E. A. Payne, "Who Were the Baptists?", *Baptist Quarterly*, 16 (1956), 303-312; J. O. Mosteller, "Baptists and Anabaptists", *The Chronicle*, 20 (1957), 3-27, 100-115; Lonnie D. Kliever, "General Baptist Origins: The Question of Anabaptist Influence," *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 34 (1962), 291-321. The historical debate on the subject has been reviewed by Goki Saito, "An Investigation into the Relationship between the Early English Baptists and the Dutch Anabaptists" (Ph.D. dissertation, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1974).

evangelical Christians. Thus the Southern Baptist Convention, meeting in Fort Worth, Texas, in 1890, adopted a resolution calling for an interdenominational committee to study the basis of agreement on fundamental issues among Christian bodies which adhered to the sole authority of Holy Scripture.⁸ The kind of "evangelical ecumenicity" which the Convention envisioned has in fact come to pass as Baptists have worked side

by side with other Christians of like persuasion on numerous concerns from the Anti-Saloon League to Billy Graham crusades and Bible translation committees. The (often unspoken) basis of such cooperative efforts has been a shared commitment to the values of evangelical Christianity. This is not to deny that Baptists have also been, at different times and in varying measures, parochial, isolationist, and even downright snobbish in their attitude toward other evangelicals.⁹ An effective antidote to such prejudice is a better knowledge of the Baptist tradition itself and the Reformation roots from which it has sprung.

Themes in Baptist Theology: "That Wholesome Protestant Doctrine"

Exactly 300 years ago, in the fall of 1689, the General Assembly of the Particular Baptists of England published what is arguably the most influential confession of faith in Baptist history. The Second London Confession, as it was called, closely paralleled two prior confessional standards: the Savoy Declaration, put forth by the English Congregationalists in 1658, and the Westminster Confession of 1646, the authoritative creed of English Presbyterians. With minor adaptations, the Second London Confession was adopted by the Philadelphia Baptist Association, which secured the services of Benjamin Franklin to republish it in 1743. It quickly became the dominant confessional standard of

⁸ This remarkable proposal was put forth by T. T. Eaton and antedated by two decades the famous call by Episcopal bishop Charles H. Brent for a world conference on faith and order. E. C. Dargan refers to this resolution in his *Ecclesiology: A Study of the Churches* (Louisville: Chas. T. Dearing, 1897), 153. See also James Leo Garrett, Jr., E. Glenn Hinson, and James E. Tull, *Are Southern Baptists "Evangelicals"?* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1983), 105.

⁹ A blunt example of this attitude is the comment made by Foy Valentine during the 1976 presidential election. In an interview with *Newsweek*, he said concerning Southern Baptists: "We are not evangelicals. That's a Yankee word. They want to claim us because we are big and successful and growing every year. But we have our own traditions, our own hymns and more students in our seminaries than they have in all of theirs put together." Kenneth L. Woodard et al., "Born Again! The Year of the Evangelicals," *Newsweek* 88 (October 25, 1976), 76.

Baptists in America.¹⁰

In the preface to the Second London Confession, the Baptists of 1689 acknowledge the close similarity between their document and other orthodox confessions, even to the point of common wording "in all the fundamental articles of the Christian religion." Moreover, they declare that they have deliberately pursued this strategy in order to convince all that we have no itch to clog religion with new words, but to readily acquiesce in that form of sound words which hath been in consent with the holy scriptures, used by others before us; hereby declaring before God, angels, and men, our hearty agreement with them, in that wholesome Protestant doctrine, which, with so clear evidence of scriptures they have asserted.¹¹

We can discern an apologetic motive behind the Baptist insistence that they, with other Protestants, were indeed sound orthodox Christians, innocent of the "heterodoxies and fundamental errors" of which they had been accused. A similar concern had moved the framers of the earlier London Confession of 1644; indeed, they declared, it was "the maine wheele that set us aworke."¹² Leon McBeth has correctly observed that Baptists "often used confessions not to proclaim "Baptist distinctives" but instead to show how similar Baptists were to other orthodox Christians."¹³ A survey of Baptist confessions reveals a preoccupation with the same themes which were central in the theology of the great reformers of the sixteenth century.

The Doctrine of God

The Protestant reformers saw themselves in continuity with the Trinitarian and

¹⁰ The text of the *Second London Confession* (hereafter abbreviated SLC) is given in W. L. Lumpkin (ed.), *Baptist Confessions of faith* (Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1959), 241-295. Originally drafted in 1677, this confession formed the basis of Southern Baptists' first official doctrinal statement, the *Abstract of Principles of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary*. According to James P. Boyce, there was strong sentiment in favor of adopting the *Philadelphia Confession en toto* as the Seminary's doctrinal standard. In the end, however, it was deemed that an abstract of the *Confession* would suffice. Nonetheless, Boyce insisted that the *Abstract*, in congruence with the *Confession*, exhibit completely "the fundamental doctrines of grace" and reflect clearly "the practices universally prevalent among us." James P. Boyce, "The Doctrinal Position of the Seminary," *Western Recorder*, June 20, 1874.

¹¹ Lumpkin, *Confessions*, 245.

¹² Lumpkin, *Confessions*, 154.

¹³ McBeth, *Baptist Heritage*, 68.

Christological consensus of the early church. They especially emphasized the will of God, his sovereignty over creation and his providential governance of nature and history over against certain static and pantheistic conceptions of God which had arisen in the scholastic theology of the Middle Ages. Philip S. Watson has aptly interpreted Luther's theology through the praise, "Let God be God!" "In Luther, the theocentricity of primitive Christianity returns: he seeks to eradicate every vestige of the egocentric and anthropocentric tendency from the religious relationship."¹⁴

Baptists too developed their theology in the light of Luther's "Copernican revolution." Their confessions usually begin with an affirmation of the being and attributes of God, who is portrayed as utterly transcendent, graciously beneficent, and immutably just in all his dealings with humankind. While thus asserting the *absoluteness* of God ("immutable, immense, eternal, incomprehensible, Almighty, every way infinite"),¹⁵ Baptists strongly resisted the deist notion of an "absentee landlord" God who seldom if ever interfered with his creation. In their doctrine of providence Baptists echoed Calvin's idea that in every one of life's events, human beings have direct "business with God" (*negotium cum Deo*).¹⁶ *The Abstract of Principles* ably summarizes this point when it declares that God, without violating human responsibility or making himself the author of sin, "from eternity, decrees or permits all things that come to pass, and perpetually upholds, directs and governs all creatures and all events."¹⁷

Just as the reformers of the sixteenth century found themselves beset with an incipient anti-Trinitarianism, so the Baptists of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries relived this classic debate within their own ranks. In the wake of the Act of Toleration (1689), the General Baptists were drawn more and more into a rationalistic denial of the deity of Christ and the doctrine of the Trinity. Many General Baptist congregations became in fact Unitarian. A remnant, however, remained faithful to the patristic and Reformation foundations of their tradition. These faithful few continued to revere the "Orthodox

¹⁴ Philip S. Watson, *Let God Be God!* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1947), 37. For this motif in Luther's own writings, see WA 10/1, 25.5.

¹⁵ *SLC*, II. 1.

¹⁶ *Institutes* 1.17.2: "Therefore no one will weigh God's providence properly and profitably but him who considers that his business is with his Maker and the Framer of the universe, and with becoming humility submits himself to fear and reverence."

¹⁷ Robert A. Baker (ed.), *A Baptist Source Book* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1966), 138.

Confession" of 1678 which had incorporated (article 38) the Apostles', Nicene, and Athanasian creeds declaring that all three "ought thoroughly to be received, and believed. For we believe, they may be proved, by most undoubted authority of Holy Scripture, and are necessary to be understood of all Christians."¹⁸

Christology

The Reformation was marked by a decided stress on the work of Christ rather than the person of Christ. Philip Melancthon spoke for all of the mainline reformers when he declared that "to know Christ means to know His benefits, not to reflect upon His natures and the modes of His incarnation... . We do better to adore the mysteries of Deity than to investigate them."¹⁹ While Luther may have tended toward Monophysitism, and Calvin toward Nestorianism, both remained intentionally faithful to the Chalcedonian description of Jesus Christ as "one in person, two in nature."

The centrality of Jesus Christ in Reformation theology is reflected in Baptist hymnody and preaching as well as in formal theological documents. Early Baptist confessions followed the Reformed pattern of focusing on Christ as Mediator in his threefold office of Prophet, Priest, and King. Baptists have stressed both the complete deity and full humanity of Jesus Christ, just as they have emphasized both the objectivity of the atonement ("Christ... hath fully satisfied the justice of God [and] procured reconciliation") and the experiential appropriation of the same in regeneration.²⁰

Huldrych Zwingli's statement that "Christ is the only way to salvation of all who were, are now, or shall be" is a good representation of the sentiment of Baptists who, since the time of William Carey, have been pioneers in the modern missionary movement.²¹ The importance of this Christological concern was

¹⁸ Lumpkin, *Confessions*, 326. On the General Baptist decline and apostasy, see A. C. Underwood, *A History of the English Baptists* (London: Carey Kingsgate Press, 1947), 112-125. It has been suggested that the explicit Arminianism of the Generals contributed to their vulnerability to Unitarianism. It was an Arminian, however, Dan Taylor, who led a strong evangelical resurgence among the Generals with his "New Connection" movement in the late eighteenth century. More plausible is the suggestion of Leon McBeth that the Generals, perhaps under the influence of the Quakers, put more emphasis on "mystery" (inner, mystical experience) to the neglect of "history" (the written Scriptures). *Baptist Heritage*, 155.

¹⁹ *Melancthon and Bucer*, ed. Wilhelm Pauck (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1959), 21, 23-24.

²⁰ *SLC*, VIII. 5.

²¹ "Dannenher der enig weg zur siligkeit Christus ist aller, die ie warend, sind und werden."

voiced by E. Y. Mullins in a famous address to the Southern Baptist Convention in 1923. Speaking in a time of great denominational tension, Mullins rallied the Convention around certain basic nonnegotiable truths concerning Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ was born of the Virgin Mary through the power of the Holy Spirit. He was the divine and eternal Son of God. He wrought miracles, healing the sick, casting out demons, raising the dead. He died as the vicarious atoning Savior of the world and was buried. He rose again from the dead. The tomb was emptied of its contents. In his risen body he appeared many times to his disciples. He ascended to the right hand of the Father. He will come again in person, the same Jesus who ascended from the Mount of Olives. We believe that adherence to the above truths and facts is a necessary condition of service for teachers of our Baptist school.²²

Two years later, the Southern Baptist Convention adopted its first confessional statement, *The Baptist Faith and Message*, which used similar language to characterize Baptist belief in "God the Son."²³

Holy Scripture

The Reformation principle of *sola scriptura* was first affirmed by Luther in his debate with John Eck at Leipzig in 1519. Here Luther declared that popes and church councils could err and that true doctrine could be based on the Bible alone. It should be noted that the issue between the reformers and the Church of Rome was not the divine inspiration or trustworthiness of the Bible. Everyone agreed on these cardinal truths. What was at stake was the relative authority of Scripture and tradition. Was the church to be based on what God had once and for all said (*Deus dixit*) in Holy Writ, or was the Bible itself to be judged in light of the cumulative traditions of the institutional church? The reformers did not discount completely the value of church tradition, but they clearly subordinated

Huldreich Zwinglis Samtliche Werke, ed. Emil Egli, Georg Finsler, et al. (Berlin, 1950ff.), 1:458. For further discussion of this text, see Timothy George, *Theology of the Reformers* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1988), 125-126.

²² *Annual Southern Baptist Convention*, 1923.

²³ Lumpkin, *Confessions*, p. 394. The most recent theological dispute of note among British Baptists focused on Christology. In a speech before the Baptist Union Assembly in 1971, Michael Taylor compared belief in the deity of Christ to a child's belief in the tooth fairy! George R. Beasley-Murray replied to Taylor's views in a widely circulated paper, "The Christological Controversy in the Baptist Union."

it to the primacy of Holy Scripture.

The mainline reformers also distanced themselves from those spiritualists and mystics who placed their own religious experience above the objectively given revelation of God. The second of the "Ten Conclusions of Berne" (1528) expressed this positive biblicism which was to govern Baptist church life no less than that of the Protestant reformers: "The Church of Christ makes no laws or commandments apart from the Word of God; hence all human traditions are not binding upon us except so far as they are grounded upon or prescribed in the Word of God."²⁴

Historically, Baptists have used a variety of words to describe the Bible: inspired, infallible, certain, true, without error, etc. All of these terms underscore a fundamental commitment to the authority of Holy Scripture. Roger Williams spoke for many early Baptists when he declared that "every word, syllable and tittle in that Scripture or writing is the word, or immediate revealed will of God."²⁵ For much of their history Baptists debated with Presbyterians, Methodists, and other evangelical Christians with whom they differed on baptism, church order, etc., but with whom they shared an implicit confidence in the total truthfulness of the common source to which they appealed. Since the Enlightenment, however, with the rise of modern biblical criticism, the Bible has become a focus of controversy within the Baptist family itself. In a perceptive article on "Biblical Authority According to Baptist Confessions of Faith," James Leo Garrett, Jr. points out that the question of biblical infallibility and/or inerrancy, which has evoked controversy among Baptists during the twentieth century, was not mentioned in the ancient creeds of Christianity, with their focus on the Trinity and Christology, [or] in the major sixteenth-century Reformation confessions of faith, because the issue had not yet arisen.²⁶

It is certainly true that Baptists, with other evangelical Christians, face critical issues related to the Bible which the reformers never knew. The Downgrade Controversy, the Fundamentalist-Modernist struggles, and to some extent the current dispute over inerrancy in the Southern Baptist Convention are all part of a common effort: to remain faithful to the historic Baptist

²⁴ John H. Leith (ed.), *Creeds of the Churches* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1982), 129-130.

²⁵ Roger Williams, *The Complete Writings of Roger Williams* (New York: Russell and Russell, 1963), 5:387.

²⁶ James Leo Garrett, Jr., "Biblical Authority According to Baptist Confessions of Faith," *Review and Expositor* 76 (1979), 45.

confidence in the Bible as the totally true and authoritative Word of God while allowing for the legitimate advances of modern biblical scholarship. It is precisely this tension which underlies the *Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy* (1978), a document which appears to be gaining wider acceptance among Southern Baptists.²⁷

Of course, the Bible was much more than an infallible artifact of revelation to the reformers; it conveyed a sense of encounter with the living God and elicited a religious response for the hearer. Baptists are most clearly the heirs of the Reformation in their stress on the existential appropriation of Holy Scripture. John Bunyan, who was deeply indebted to Luther and the other reformers, once asked: "Have you never a hill Mizar to remember? Have you forgot the close, the milk house, the stable, the barn, and the like, where God did visit your soul? Remember also the Word-the Word, I say, upon which the Lord hath caused you to hope."²⁸ Calvin taught that the very Holy Spirit who had inspired the prophets and apostles to pen the text of Scripture was present to illuminate the hearts of contemporary believers when they read the Bible. The internal witness of the Holy Spirit is a major feature of the Baptist doctrine of Holy Scripture, one which had prevented their lapsing into a sterile rationalism.²⁹

Soteriology

The two burning questions of the Reformation were "What must I do to be

²⁷ I base this statement on the recent Ridgecrest conferences on inerrancy sponsored by the SBC seminary presidents where the text of the Chicago Statement seems to have been in the forefront of many of the discussions, as well as the projected new commentary from Broadman Press which uses the Chicago Statement as a guideline for writers. Of course, the term inerrancy is not a new word in the denomination. In a book published by the Sunday School Board in 1900, entitled *Baptists, Why and Why Not*, J. M. Frost, then the Corresponding Secretary of the Board, wrote: "We accept the Scriptures as an all-sufficient and infallible rule of faith and practice, and insist upon the absolute inerrancy and sole authority of the Word of God." Many Baptists, however, are uncomfortable using the word because of its recent political connotations or because of its presumed incompatibility with sound biblical scholarship. For a collection of essays representing this point of view, see Robison B. James (ed.), *The Unfettered Word* (Waco: Word Books, 1987).

²⁸ John Bunyan, *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners* (London: Oxford University Press, 1928), 5.

²⁹ On this emphasis in Calvin, see George, *Reformers*, 196-199. The *Second London Confession* declares that "our full persuasion and assurance of the infallible truth and divine authority [of the Bible], is from the inward work of the Holy Spirit, bearing witness by and with the Word in our hearts." Lumpkin, *Confessions*, 250.

saved?" and "Where can I find the true church?" Luther's doctrine of justification by faith alone was, as he put it, the "article by which the church either stands or falls." Pitched against the medieval Catholic system of works-righteousness, the Protestant doctrine of salvation harked back to the Pauline-Augustinian theology of grace. Indeed, to paraphrase Adolf von Harnack, the mainline reformers represented an acute Augustinianization of Christianity. Original sin, effectual calling, and predestination became lively topics of debate, not only between Protestants and Catholics but also among the reformers themselves.

As we have observed already, English Baptists were born amidst this controversy and became hearty participants in it. The very names which distinguished the two Baptist groupings-Generals and Particulars-recalled their differing views on the extent of the atonement. Calvin had commented sparingly on this point, but by the early seventeenth century it had become a major *locus of dispute* within Reformed theology. We have noted that the Arminian General Baptists were largely swallowed up by Unitarianism; by 1891 both General and Particular Baptists had merged into a single Baptist Union. Nevertheless, we should not underestimate the intensity of the debate between Calvinist and Arminian Baptists in the early decades of their coexistence. B. R. White has likened it to the dispute between Fundamentalists and Liberals in some Baptist circles today.³⁰

Despite a persistent Arminian strain within Baptist life, for most of their history most Baptists have adhered faithfully to the doctrines of grace as set forth by the mainline reformers. In the first decade of the nineteenth century the Baptist historian, David Benedict, made an extensive tour of Baptist churches throughout America. He gave the following summary of the Baptist theology he encountered:

Take this denomination at large, I believe the following will be found a pretty correct statement of their views of doctrine. They hold that man in his natural condition is entirely depraved and sinful; that unless he is born again – changed by grace or made alive unto God – he cannot be fitted for the communion of saints on earth, nor the enjoyment of God in Heaven; that where God hath begun a good work, he will carry it on to the end; that there

³⁰ B. R. White, "The Frontiers of Fellowship Between English Baptists, 1609-1660," *Foundations*, 11 (1968), 249.

is an election of grace—an effectual calling, etc. and that the happiness of the righteous and the misery of the wicked will both be eternal.³¹

When in 1856 James Petigru Boyce set forth his plan for Southern Baptists' first theological seminary, he warned against the twin errors of Campbellism and Arminianism, the distinctive principles of which "have been engrafted upon many of our Churches: and even some of our Ministry have not hesitated publicly to avow them."³² As late as 1905, F. H. Kerkfoot, Boyce's successor as professor of systematic theology at Southern Seminary, could still say, "Nearly all Baptists believe what are usually termed the 'doctrines of grace.'"³³ E. Y. Mullins, who disliked the labels "Calvinist" and "Arminian," sought to transcend the controversy altogether. While retaining most of the content of traditional Calvinist soteriology, he gave it a new casting by restating it in terms of his distinctive theology of experience.³⁴

For some the evangelical Calvinism of earlier Baptist generations has been eclipsed by a truncated hyper-Calvinism with its anti-missionary, anti-evangelistic emphases. Many other factors have also contributed to the blurring of this part of the Reformation heritage which has shaped Baptist identity: the routinization of revivalism, the growth of pragmatism as a denominational strategy, an attenuated doctrine of the Holy Spirit, and a general theological laxity which has resulted in doctrinal apathy. While seeking to restate traditional themes in fresh contemporary ways, Baptists would do well to connect again with the ideas which informed the theology of such great heroes of the past as John Bunyan, Rogers Williams, Andrew Fuller, Adoniram Judson, Luther Rice, and Charles Haddon Spurgeon.

Ecclesiology

In the perspective of the Reformation the church of Jesus Christ is that communion of saints and congregation of the faithful who heard the Word of

³¹ David Benedict, *A General History of the Baptist Denomination in America* (Boston: Lincoln and Edmands, 1813), 2:456.

³² James P. Boyce, *Three Changes in Theological Institutions: An Inaugural Address Delivered before the Board of Trustees of the Furman University* (Greenville: C. J. Elford's Book and Job Press, 1856), 33.

³³ Quoted, Thomas J. Nettles, *By His Grace and for His Glory* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1986), 50. Nettles' volume is the first comprehensive survey of the doctrines of grace in Baptist life.

³⁴ For a comparison of Boyce and Mullins, see Timothy George, "Systematic Theology at Southern Seminary," *Review and Expositor* 82 (1985), 31-47.

God in Holy Scripture and which, through obedient service to its Lord, bears witness to that Word in the world. Luther rejected the German word for church, *Kirche*, preferring to speak instead of community, *Gemeinde*, that which is shared in common, life together. For him the church in an ultimate sense could not be defined in terms of institution, or officers, or structures. It is the people of God awakened to his grace through the proper preaching of the Word and the pure administration of the sacraments (*Augsburg Confession*, VII). If Luther's predominant concern was with the evangelical center of the church, later reformers, notably Calvin, the Puritans, and the Anabaptists, took greater pains in determining its circumference. Both of these strands in Reformation ecclesiology were taken up by the Baptists who hammered out their own distinctive doctrine of the church. We can hear echoes of Reformation debates in Baptist discussions of the following five themes.

(1) *The Church as the Body of Christ*. This phrasing was a significant addendum in the 1963 revision of the Baptist Faith and Message. The earlier 1925 statement had spoken only of the church in a local sense as a "congregation of baptized believers." The reluctance to speak of the universal church is part of the legacy of Landmarkism which still lingers in some quarters of Baptist life. Early Baptist confessions, however, acknowledged with Luther and Calvin the connection between ecclesiology and the doctrine of election. They speak of the universal, invisible, even "Catholick" church which "consists of the whole number of the Elect, that have been, are, or shall be gathered into one under Christ the head thereof."³⁵

(2) *Priesthood of All Believers*. Perhaps at no point would contemporary Baptists consider themselves more the heirs of Luther than in their adherence to the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers. Yet no element in his teaching is more misunderstood. For Luther the priesthood of all believers did not mean that every Christian is his or her own priest and hence possesses the "right of private judgment" in matters of faith and doctrine. This is a modern perversion of Luther's original intention. The essence of his doctrine can be put in one sentence: Every Christian is someone else's priest, and we are all priests to one another. The priesthood of all believers speaks more of the Christian's service than his status. The early Baptists spoke of the local church as a "compact and knit Citie" composed of visible saints who maintain "an holy fellowship and

³⁵ SLC, XXVI. 1; Lumpkin, *Confessions*, 285.

communion in the worship of God, and in performing such other spiritual services as tend to their mutual edification."³⁶ Russell Aldwinckle has reminded Baptists of the importance of recovering the original Reformation meaning of this great principle.

In our claims to freedom Baptists need to be on guard against a serious misunderstanding of the priesthood of all believers as this was understood by the Protestant Reformers. The Priesthood of all believers means the freedom within the community of believers to be, as Luther said, Christ to our neighbour, to show forth the special kind of love and compassion which flows from Christ and works in those who are members of His body, the church.³⁷

(3) *Covenant and Discipline*. Baptist ecclesiology most closely approximates the Anabaptist ideal in its emphasis on the church as an intentional community composed of regenerated and baptized believers who are bound to one another and to their Lord by a solemn covenant. Historically, the ritual of covenant taking was both the means of gathering a new congregation at its inception and a rite of passage into the fellowship for new members. The early Baptists, like the English Separatists and the Anabaptists before them, regarded discipline as an essential mark of a true visible church. Following Matthew 18:15-18, Baptist confessions outline the procedures of admonition, censure, and excommunication. Although susceptible to abuse, church discipline was intended to be remedial: it aimed at restoring the lapsed brother or sister to full fellowship if possible. Beyond that, it served to mark off clearly the boundaries between the church and its envioning culture and thus to preserve the purity of the witness of the church in the world. As Baptists have evolved from small sectarian beginnings into what one historian has called "the catholic phase of their history," both the covenantal and disciplinary features of their church life have become marginal to their identity. With the loss of these historic distinctives has come a new crisis of spirituality.

(4) *Baptism and the Lord's Supper*. Baptists have followed the Protestant

³⁶ Lumpkin, *Confessions*, 168, 290.

³⁷ This is an excerpt from an address on "The Nature and Purpose of our Freedom," delivered to the Baptist World Alliance in 1965. It is reprinted in Walter B. Shurden (ed.), *The Life of Baptists in the Life of the World* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1985), 213-219. For a further elucidation of this theme, see Timothy George, "The Priesthood of All Believers and the Quest for Theological Integrity", *Criswell Theological Review* 3 (1989).

reformers in retaining only two of the seven sacraments observed by the medieval church. Most Baptists prefer the word *ordinances* to sacraments as a way of distancing themselves from sacramentalism, a view which imputes salvific efficacy to the creaturely elements or the liturgical rite rather than to the Creator and Redeemer. One of the most important contributions which Baptists have made to the wider life of the church is their recovery of the early church practice of baptism as an adult rite of initiation signifying a committed participation in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. In many contemporary Baptist settings, however, baptism is in danger of being divorced from the context of a decisive life commitment. This unfortunate development is reflected both in the liturgical placement of baptism in the worship service—often tacked on at the end as a kind of afterthought—and also in the proper age and preparation of baptism candidates. This situation muffles the historic Baptist protest against infant baptism, a protest which insisted on the intrinsic connection between biblical baptism and repentance and faith.

Baptist understandings of the Lord's Supper have followed a similar minimalist trajectory. While the reformers of the sixteenth century debated furiously over proper eucharistic theology, they all deeply valued the Lord's Supper as a centering experience of worship in the life of the church. Luther declared that the Supper is given for "daily food and sustenance to refresh and strengthen us." Calvin called it a "spiritual banquet," while even Zwingli, with his memorialist emphasis, admitted that it "supports and augments faith." For none of the Reformation traditions is it correct to characterize the Lord's Supper as "merely" a symbol. In seeking to articulate a balanced eucharistic theology, Baptists can do no better than to listen afresh to what their seventeenth-century forbears declared in the *Second London Confession*:

Worthy receivers, outwardly partaking of the visible Elements in this Ordinance, do then also inwardly by faith, really and indeed, yet not cardinally, and corporally, but spiritually receive, and feed upon Christ crucified and all the benefits of his death: the Body and Blood of Christ, being then not corporally, or carnally, but spiritually present to the faith of Believers, in that Ordinance, as the Elements themselves are to their outward senses.³⁸

³⁸ Lumpkin, *Confessions*, 293. For an excellent summary of the Reformation debates over the Lord's Supper, see Gottfried W. Locher, *Zwingli's Thought: New Perspectives* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1981), 220-228, 303-339. On baptism, see Timothy George, "The Southern Baptists," *Baptism and Church: A*

(5) *Cooperation and Mission.* One of the tragic consequences of the Reformation was the splitting into competing parties, camps, and movements of committed Christians who were united in their basic adherence to the evangelical faith. Out of this very ferment, however, there arose a quest for Christian unity. Indeed, the first efforts to isolate certain "fundamentals" of the faith—an exercise usually associated with a fractious, divisive spirit—were part of an irenicist movement among the reformers of conflicting confessions.

Despite their reserve about full participation in modern ecumenical endeavors, Baptists have cooperated among themselves and with other evangelical Christians throughout their history. The development of associational connections, support for missionary and educational movements, the organizing of conventions and denominations all bear witness to this fact. The recent evangelical resurgence in American Christianity offers Southern Baptists in particular an opportunity to extend the frontiers of fellowship and cooperation with likeminded brothers and sisters who share many of the same Reformation roots and among whom may be found many willing partners in a common witness to a lost world.

Conclusion

In 1928 F. W. Patterson, then president of Acadia University, addressed the Baptist World Alliance which was meeting in Toronto. In the context of resisting calls for Baptists to join with other Protestants in a church merger, Patterson nonetheless spoke warmly of the common linkage which joined Baptists with other heirs of the Reformation.

The things that Baptists have in common with other Protestants are much more important than the things in which they differ from them. If we think of other Protestants in terms of origins, Baptists spring from the same general stock; if we think of them in terms of truth, Baptists confess joyfully that they hold great areas of truth in common; they are nourished by the same Scriptures: they believe in the same God and in His grace; they worship in the same spirit; they recognize equally the fact of sin, the necessity of redemption, the initiative of God in the work of redemption, and the sufficiency of Jesus Christ as the way of God. If we think of them in terms of objectives, our general aim and our major emphasis are the same. We know that Baptists have no monopoly of Christianity

and that it is more important that men be Christian than that they be Baptist.³⁹

Patterson had no intention of denigrating the distinctive features of the Baptist heritage. Indeed, his concluding argument was that Baptists could best serve Christ not by joining a pan-church union but rather by "becoming better Baptists." He knew and valued the great role Baptists had played in the struggle for religious liberty; he appreciated the special patterns of worship, church order, and missionary outreach which to his mind justified the continued existence of Baptists as a unique denomination. Yet he analyzed correctly, I believe, the wider theological and spiritual context which placed Baptists within the larger family of evangelical Christianity. He called on Baptists of his generation to recognize and celebrate this affinity while not forgetting their own specific history and mission within the Body of Christ. This is a message Baptists still need urgently to hear as they face a new identity crisis in the last decade of the twentieth century.

³⁹ Shurden (ed.), *Life of Baptists*, 86.

CALVIN AND SERVETUS IN DISPUTE OVER IRENÆUS

David F. Wright

On September 21, 1553, towards the end of the Genevan proceedings against Michael Servetus, Jaquemor Grenoz was dispatched by the city council to carry out a consultation of the magistrates and the ministers of Zürich, Berne, Basel and Schaffhausen. This was a familiar task for Grenoz, but on this occasion he was to take with him a copy of Servetus's *Christianismi Restitutio*, two statements from the prosecution and one from the defence, and copies of the 1528 Basel editions of the works of Tertullian and Irenaeus.¹ These two volumes were included because, in response to the first prosecution document, a list of thirty-eight *Sententiae vel Propositiones* excerpted from Servetus's writings by Calvin at the behest of the city fathers,² Servetus had presented sixteen passages or groups of passages from Tertullian and ten from Irenaeus, as well as five from the supposed *Epistula Petri* prefaced to the Pseudo-Clementine *Homilies*, together with a rapid rejoinder to the thirty-eight heads.³ The second statement for the prosecution carried by Grenoz was a much longer *Brevis Refutatio* of all of Servetus's points over the names of fourteen Genevan ministers headed by Calvin.⁴

None of the responses to the Genevan council's request for the judgement of the ministers of the four other cities mentioned Irenaeus or Tertullian, although all of them except Schaffhausen named some of the ancient heresies, pre- and post-Nicene, which Servetus had perpetrated.⁵ Time would scarcely

¹ *Calvini Opera* [= CO] 8:804.

² CO 8:501-8. Calvin's role, CO 8:500.

³ CO 8:507-18.

⁴ CO 8:519-53.

⁵ CO 8:555 (Zürich), 815 and 819 (Berne), 821-2 (Basel). The ministers of Basel state that what Servetus vomited from a single brazenly blasphemous mouth had been attacked in numerous diverse particulars "a melioris notae ecclesiae Doctoribus Patribusque" (822). On the consultation exercise see Emile Doumergue, *Jean Calvin. Les hommes et les choses de son temps*, 7 vols (Lausanne and Paris, 1899-1927), 6:346-51; Roland H. Bainton, *Hunted Heretic. The Life and Death of Michael*

allow for extended study of these two eminent pre-Nicene Fathers as Grenoz moved from city to city, eliciting responses on the way, Zürich's first on October 2, Berne's last on October 19. Geneva's keenness to secure their backing for its harsh verdict on Servetus did not extend to leaving a copy of Irenaeus and Tertullian in each city for protracted scrutiny. Perhaps the Genevans made the task as straightforward as they could by marking in each of them the contested proof-texts which had been cited by Servetus by page number in these editions.⁶ One wonders whether, if this were the case, either volume is now identifiable. The 1572 catalogue of the Genevan Academy's library listed a copy of the 1528 Irenaeus edition (but not of Tertullian), which is still in Geneva. The Geneva Library in fact holds a second copy of the same work.⁷

The prominence thus given to Irenaeus and Tertullian requires no explanation. According to Jerome Friedman's statistics, they were top of the patristic pops for Servetus, with 108 and 68 citations respectively.⁸ In the trial at Geneva Tertullian received more extended exposure from Servetus, and hence in the Genevan pastors' rebuttal. But while it is broadly the case that Servetus's system claimed an unparalleled dependence on Irenaeus and Tertullian, and only to a lesser degree on other pre-Nicene writers (in part for the obvious reason that their works were not published in time⁹), it is not strictly true that "Augustine and Athanasius were always cited in a negative light as good examples of corrupted Christian doctrine".¹⁰ On occasions an appeal to Augustine was an *ad hominem* device: "Augustinum tu soles audire," says Servetus to Calvin as he adduces Augustine's *Retractationes*.¹¹ But elsewhere he appears to rely genuinely on Augustine ("Contra te id aperte docet tuus

Servetus 1511-1553 (Boston, MA, 1960), 202-4.

⁶ Servetus's response consisting largely of the *loci* from Tertullian and Irenaeus is printed in CO 8:507-18 from his own autograph (col. 507 n. 3), which presumably included the page numbers as given in CO. However, this leaves some uncertainty whether Servetus used the 1528 editions of these two Fathers, for Froben printings in other years (e.g. 1534 for Irenaeus) had the same paginations.

⁷ Alexandre Ganoczy, *La Bibliothèque de l'Académie de Calvin* (Geneva, 1969), 168. Also preserved from the Academy's collection are a 1548 Irenaeus and a 1550 Tertullian, both from Froben in Basel (*ibid.*, 177, 180).

⁸ Jerome Friedman, *Michael Servetus. A Case Study in Total Heresy* (Travaux d'Humanisme et Renaissance 163; Geneva, 1978), 103 n. 1.

⁹ Bainton, *Hunted Heretic*, 42.

¹⁰ Friedman, *Michael Servetus*, 103 n. 1.

¹¹ Epistola 25 to Calvin, CO 8:705.

Augustinus in Ioannem tractatu 8 et 37¹²) and on other post-Nicenes. Thus in one of his letters to Calvin he includes Augustine, Athanasius (expounding Nicaea), Hilary and Cyril of Alexandria as witnesses to a proper understanding of the *persona Christi as creata*.¹³

Nevertheless, such citations scarcely qualify the broad picture. Servetus's reconstruction of true Christianity assigns a privileged place to pre-Nicene authorities, and supreme among them are Irenaeus and Tertullian.¹⁴ Running like a refrain through Philipp Melanchthon's critical comments on Servetus, from a letter of 1533 through all editions of the *Loci Communes* from 1535 to 1559, is the verdict that he does despite (*iniuriam*) to Tertullian and Irenaeus.¹⁵

It is highly probable that it was in Basel in 1530-31, part of the time as house-guest of Oecolampadius, that Servetus first came across the recently-published works of Irenaeus and Tertullian. Some time between summer 1530 and May 1531, Oecolampadius in two letters to Servetus criticized severely his misuse of Tertullian and Irenaeus respectively. "Tertullian gets greater honour from you than does the whole church... You do despite (*iniuriam*) to the Fathers."¹⁶ Oecolampadius cited no work of Tertullian in rebuking Servetus, but

¹² Epistola 22, CO 8:693.

¹³ Epistola 8, CO 8:665.

¹⁴ In the 1960 reprinting of his *Hunted Heretic* (1953), Roland Bainton reported the discovery by Stanislas Kot of a new work by Servetus in a manuscript in Stuttgart, entitled *Declarationis Jesu Christi Filii Dei libri V*. It displayed "a larger dependence on Irenaeus" (xii, 22-3). Kot announced the find in his 1953 essay "L'influence de Michel Servet sur le mouvement antitrinitaire en Pologne et en Transylvanie", in Bruno Becker (ed.), *Autour de Michel Servet et de Sébastien Castellion* (Haarlem, 1953), 72-115, at 86-94, 113-15. But its promised early publication was not realized, no doubt because of uncertainty about its authorship, which is now attributed to the Paduan lawyer, Matthew Gribaldi: see George Huntston Williams, *The Radical Reformation*, 3rd edition (Sixteenth Century Essays & Studies 15; Kirksville, MO, 1992), 450, 956-7 (950-53 on Gribaldi). The *Declaratio* may still be viewed as a summary of Servetus's opinions by an admirer. The different uses it and Servetus make of Irenaeus is confirmation of non-Servetan authorship: see Carlos Gilly, *Spanien und der Basler Buchdruck bis 1600* (Basler Beiträge zur Geschichtswissenschaft 151; Basel and Frankfurt, 1985), 306-7 with n. 113.

¹⁵ See CR 2:640 (to Joachim Camerarius, 15 March 1533), 660 (to Johannes Brenz, July 1533); 3:749 (to the senate of Venice, July 1539); 21:263, 359 (1535), 622 (1543-1559). Servetus would rebut Melanchthon's criticisms in his *Apologia* "on the Mystery of the Trinity and the Teaching (disciplina) of the Fathers, to Philipp Melanchthon and his Colleagues", which forms the last part of the *Restitutio*, 671-734.

¹⁶ Ernst Staehelin (ed.), *Briefe und Akten zum Leben Oekolampads*, II: 1527-1593 (Quellen und Forschungen zur Reformationgeschichte 19; Leipzig, 1934), 472-3, no. 765.

in the second letter he quoted six extracts from Irenaeus in demonstration of the corrective beliefs he was urging on Servetus – the co-eternity of the Word with the Father, the perfection of the divinity of the Word, the function of birth and filiation to convey the nature of the begetter (and not solely to denote a physical beginning), the Word as truly Son of the Father, not merely by representation of future sonship. None of these six quotations appeared in Servetus's works of 1531 and 1532, *The Errors of the Trinity* and *Dialogues*, but several of them were used in the *Restitutio* and were among the Irenaean texts he advanced in his defence at Geneva.¹⁷ Indeed, Irenaeus and Tertullian are not as predominant in the writings of 1531-32 (or for that matter in the thirty letters sent to Calvin c. 1546-47) as they would become in the *Restitutio*. Paradoxically, Oecolampadius, and Melanchthon also, focussed Servetus's attention more closely on these key ante-Nicene Fathers. It was as if their criticisms – in Melanchthon's case, in response to the writings of 1531-32, in Oecolampadius's, in apparent ignorance of their imminent publication – brought home to Servetus the commanding height they occupied among the Christian doctors of the second and third centuries.

The framework of understanding within which Servetus concentrated so heavily on the ante-Nicene Fathers is taken for granted by most modern writers, but not often made explicit by Servetus himself and never challenged by Calvin. This is how the Paduan disciple of Servetus, Matthew Gribaldi, summarized why his master drew

praesertim ex libris sanctorum virorum Irenei, Ignatii et Tertulliani qui de Filio Dei omnino aliter et multo verius senserunt quam moderni theologi, utpote qui Apostolis propinquoiores, adhuc illorum doctrinam integram conservassent, et Scripturae simplicitatem secuti, nichil sophisticum aut philosophicum miscuissent.¹⁸

Proximity to apostolic simplicity, however, explained only part of Servetus's affinity to Irenaeus and Tertullian and other second- and third-century theologians. Early in the *Restitutio*, as he prepared to set forth universos scripturae locos, qui de aequalitate Dei loquantur, which were a nostri seculi

¹⁷ Ibid. 475-6, no. 766, where the six citations are identified, but here more precisely: *Adv. Haer.* 4:20:3 (PG 7:1033), 4:20:1 (1032), 4:7:4 ('4:17'; 992), 3:19:1 ('3:21'; 939), 3:19:2-3 (in eodem capite; 940-41); 3:18:1 ('3:20'; 932).

¹⁸ From the preface to the *Declaratio*, ed. Kot, "L'influence de Michel Servet", 114 – see n. 14 above.

pugnis penitus remotos, Servetus spoke as follows of what happened in the fourth century:

Et certamen illud inter illas invisibiles personas, de aequalitate vel inaequalitate naturae, quod a Sylvestrino seculo totum orbem per Arrianos concussit, fuit inventum satanae ut mentes hominum a cognitione veri Christi alienaret, et tripartitum nobis Deum faceret.¹⁹

"From the period of [pope] Sylvester" signals the timing of the fatal ascendancy of Antichrist. Servetus frequently yoked together "Sylvester and Constantine". As he put in the shortest of the treatises that comprise his *Restitutio*, *Signa sexaginta regni Antichristi, et revelatio eius, iam nunc praesens*, although the mystery of Antichrist began soon after Christ, vere tamen emicuit, et stabilitum est regnum, tempore Sylvestri et Constantini. Quo tempore est mox oecumenico concilio a nobis ereptus filius Dei, fugata ecclesia, et abominationes omnes legibus decretae.²⁰

"In the time of Sylvester and Constantine ... the son of God was quickly snatched from us by an ecumenical council."²¹ Sometimes the accent falls on the papacy, at other times on the emperor.

Hic trinitarias ... in Deum blasphemias induxit, et monarchiam Romanam migrare Constantinopolim fecit, gloriosus confessor. Idola et imagines, ut dixi, sub hoc Sylvestro coeperunt, ad Helenae mulieris suggestionem. Varia tum mortuorum cadavera primus Constantinus Constantinopolim retulit, ut ibi adorarentur.²²

Servetus was fond of reminding his opponents of the myriad other abuses that followed in the train of the Nicene synod. How could Melanchthon, in defence of the eternally generated Son and the Spirit proceeding from both Father and Son, adduce Athanasius, that worshipper of images, and Augustine with his monasticism, that worshipper of the beast?

¹⁹ *Christianismi Restitutio*, 22. I have used the 1966 facsimile reprint by Minerva G.M.B.H., Frankfurt am Main, of C.G. von Murr's attempt to reproduce, at Nuremberg in 1790, the 1553 edition as precisely as pre-facsimile technology allowed. On the faults of Murr's text (*satis mendose expressus*, CO 8:xxxiv), see my essay, "The Edinburgh Manuscript Pages of Servetus' *Christianismi Restitutio*", in Elsie A. McKee and Brian G. Armstrong (eds.), *Probing the Reformed Tradition. Historical Studies in Honor of Edward A. Dowey* (Louisville, KY, 1989), 263-91 at 278-9. So I have checked Murr with the Edinburgh copy of 1553.

²⁰ *Restitutio* 666, correcting Murr's *est* before *stabilitum* to *et*.

²¹ My translation differs from Friedman, Michael Servetus, 37, "soon after the ecumenical council". For other linkings of Sylvester and Constantine, see *Restitutio* 395, 396, 398 (ter), 399 (bis).

²² *Restitutio* 399.

Why do you seek to frighten us with the authority of that church, Philipp, when yourself you know it to be the church of Antichrist? Or are you unaware that Christ's church has long since been put to flight? Do you not believe that Rome is Babylon? Do you really believe those who you see bear the mark of the beast? You approve of the synod of Nicaea, why not also the follies of the papacy there established?²³

"Piety degenerated along with pure doctrine."²⁴ And so Servetus drew repeated attention to the martyr Ignatius, Polycarp the martyr and disciple of John, Irenaeus the martyr, Cyprian the martyr. "All of these neither taught nor conceived of the imaginings of our trinitarians."²⁵ The first summary of the case against Servetus in the Register of the Company of Pastors attributes to him the claim that "the name of the Trinity had been in use only since the Council of Nicaea and that all the teachers and martyrs before then had not known what it was."²⁶

If such was the church-historical and apocalyptic schema in the context of which Servetus took his stand on the testimony of the pre-Nicenes – "Irenaeus above all, and the other early Fathers"²⁷ – Calvin's failure to address it is at least noteworthy. As far as Irenaeus goes (though the case is somewhat different for Tertullian), Calvin's engagement extends little further than the citations advanced by Servetus under ten heads, in responding to the thirtyeight specific charges levelled against him in the name of the Genevan pastors. It is true that, after contesting Servetus's interpretation of his Irenaeian passages, Calvin adduces four of his own.²⁸ Nevertheless, Calvin shows little enthusiasm, for understandable reasons, in challenging *toto caelo* Servetus's use of Irenaeus.

In particular, Calvin never in the proceedings against Servetus, and to my knowledge never elsewhere either, tackles the powerful myth of the fall of the church in the Constantinian era. That is to say, he did not question the privileged importance that Servetus assigned to the pre-Nicene Fathers and to

²³ Ibid. 702. Murr has distorted the punctuation of the original in the statement about Augustine.

²⁴ Ibid. 671.

²⁵ Ibid. 19.

²⁶ CO 8:726; *Registres de la Compagnie des Pasteurs de Genève au temps de Calvin*, ed. Robert M. Kingdon and Jean-François Bergier (Geneva, 1962 ff.), II, 3; *The Registers of the Company of Pastors of Geneva in the Time of Calvin*, ed. and trans. Philip E. Hughes (Grand Rapids, MI, 1966), 224.

²⁷ *Restitutio* 671.

²⁸ CO 8:533. Calvin adduces several more citations from Tertullian, CO 8, 527-30.

two of them especially. In refuting Servetus's claims in the 1559 *Institutio* Calvin asserted that anyone who carefully compared the writings of the Fathers as a whole would find in Irenaeus nothing but what his successors set forth. In support of this position, Calvin pointed out that Arius's failure at the Council of Nicaea to cite the authority of any approved writer in his defence demonstrated the *veterum consensus*. Indeed, none of the Greek or Latin Fathers had to defend himself for dissenting from the teaching of his predecessors. Augustine, who diligently scrutinized the writings of all before him, reverently embraced what Servetus has attacked as the tradition received *ab ultima antiquitate sine controversia*.²⁹

Furthermore, in this same section of the *Institutio*, although opposing no less the likes of Valentine Gentile than Servetus, Calvin showed that he was capable of sensitively identifying the context and purpose of Irenaeus's writing. If Irenaeus appeared to make the Father of Christ the sole eternal God, it was because he had to refute the argument which denied that the Father of Christ was the God of Moses and the prophets. "He concentrates totally on making plain that no other God is proclaimed in Scripture than the Father of Christ." Hence he frequently concludes that Israel's God is the very one celebrated by Christ and the apostles.³⁰

But now, Calvin continues, since we have a different error to counter, we must declare that the God who of old appeared to the patriarchs was none other than Christ. Yet if anyone demurs (*excipiat*) that it was not Christ but the Father, we have no hesitation in replying that, while our contention is for the divinity of the Son, we have no interest in excluding the Father. If only we would pay proper attention to Irenaeus who settles the issue at a stroke, insisting on this one point:

qui absolute et indefinite vocatur in Scriptura Deus, illum esse vere unicum Deum: Christum vero absolute Deum vocari.³¹

The grammatical construction shows that Calvin attributes the final

²⁹ *Institutio* 1:13:29 (OS III, 149-50).

³⁰ *Institutio* 1:13:27 (OS III, 147-8). I owe this point to Johannes van Oort, "John Calvin and the Church Fathers", in Irena Backus (ed.), *The Reception of the Church Fathers in the West. From the Carolingians to the Maurists*, 2 vols. (Leiden, 1997), II, 661-700, at 686.

³¹ *Institutio* 1:13:27 (OS III, 148). Calvin's reference to Irenaeus is (*Adversus Haereses*) 3:6 = 3:6:1, PG 7:860. For convenience, adjusted references to Irenaeus will be given to Migne.

statement, Christum ... vocari, also to Irenaeus, although the words find no recognizable basis in his text. But Calvin is here not quoting textually but giving fairly closely the gist of Irenaeus's statement, and the argument of Irenaeus's chapter sustains the concluding judgement about Christ.³² The *Institutio* furnishes a catena of pertinent references to Irenaeus demonstrating that, in Irenaeus's words, Ipse igitur Christus cum Patre vivorum est Deus.³³

This chapter of the *Institutio* is Calvin's most extended treatment of Irenaeus in opposition to the Antitrinitarians, shortly after Servetus is first named in the work.³⁴ It shows what Calvin was capable of as a student of Irenaeus in stretches of the early Father's work that Servetus rarely if ever cited. Only one of the Irenaean references debated in the Genevan trial, for example,

³² Irenaeus has: "Neque igitur Dominus, neque Spiritus sanctus, neque apostoli eum qui non esset Deus, definitive et absolute nominassent aliquando, nisi esset vere (v.l., verus) Deus; neque Dominum appellassent aliquem ex sua persona, nisi qui dominatur omnium Deum Patrem, et Filium eius, qui dominium accepit a Patre suo omnis conditionis ..."; *Adv. Haer.* 3:6:1.

³³ *Institutio* 1:13:27 (OS III, 148), citing Irenaeus 4:9 = 4:5:2 (PG 7:985).

³⁴ *Institutio* 1:13:10 (OS III, 122). This is a 1559 addition. Further careful investigation is needed into when opposition to Servetus first began to leave its mark on Calvin's writings. The naming of Servetus in his Romans commentary was added in the 1556 revision (on Romans 1:3; CO 49:10; ed. T.H.L. Parker, *Commentarius in Epistolam Pauli ad Romanos*, Studies in the History of Christian Thought 22; Leiden, 1981, 14. It is wrongly ascribed to the 1540 first edition in A. Gordon Kinder, *Bibliotheca Dissidentium X: Michael Servetus* (Bibliotheca Bibliographica Aureliana 116; Baden-Baden 1989, 27).) The mention of Servetus in *Institutio* 2:10:1 (OS III, 403) was also a 1559 insertion (which is left at best ambiguous in Willem Balke, *Calvin and the Anabaptist Radicals*, transl. from the Dutch of 1973 by William J. Heynen, Grand Rapids, MI, 1981, 99-100, cf. 97). The first certain namings of Servetus came in 1546, in the commentary on 2 Corinthians (on 5:16; CO 50:68; omitted by Kinder) and in letters of February 13 to Jean Frellon and Farel (CO 8:833-4 = 12:281-2; 12:283). It must have been early in 1546 that Calvin responded to three questions Servetus had posed to him, and then again to Servetus's refutation of his first response. The exchange was published in Calvin's major *Defensio* of 1554 (CO 8:482-95). On the dating, and also that of the series of thirty letters Servetus sent Calvin (CO 8:645-714), see Doumergue, *Jean Calvin VI*, 257-61. Kinder has not attempted to place either in his chronological list of documents. The annotations in the *Opera Selecta* on several occasions identify teachings attacked in the 1536 or 1539 editions of the *Institutio* with views of Servetus, with varying degrees of plausibility. The McNeill-Battles translation normally transcribes OS's references to Servetus's writings, not always accurately. Both OS and McNeill-Battles once or twice lose sight of chronology. OS III, 494 n.2 traces a 1536 statement about limbo to the *Restitutio* (Inst. 2:16:9; McNeill-Battles, I, 514 n. 21, follow OS but have Epist. 1 instead of Epist. 18 of Servetus's letters to Calvin). McNeill-Battles' footnote on *Inst.* 4:16:26, on the fate of those dying unbaptized, from 1539, cites the *Restitutio* (II, 1349 n. 46), again following OS V, 331, 336, but with a wrong reference (*Restitutio*, 534 instead of 564; at 534 Servetus consigns even the paedobaptizatos to hell).

was drawn from book 3 of *Adversus Haereses*. Yet Calvin does not broach the larger question, of Irenaeus's place in the development of early Christian doctrine and of the Council of Nicaea's role in it also.

Although Calvin was familiar enough with the forgery of the Donation of Constantine (which in *Institutio* 4:11:12, from 1543, he almost apologizes for having to mention), Servetus evidently accepted it, as his common linking of Constantine and Sylvester has already shown.³⁵ Tackling Servetus's delusions at this level would have entailed Calvin in disentangling Nicene trinitarian orthodoxy from the papacy. Servetus's reading of early church history was simple enough:

Whoever truly believes that the pope is Antichrist, will also truly believe that the papist Trinity, paedobaptism and other sacraments of the papacy are the doctrines of demons.³⁶

But it would have been one thing to remove the papacy from the picture, and quite another to maintain the role of Constantine in the Nicene council. The latter could be played off against the former by Calvin. It was because the bishop of Rome had no jurisdiction over the bishops of other provinces that "only the emperor could call a universal council". His was a summons of impartiality.³⁷ During the council he intervened effectively to stamp out the bishops' incestuous wrangling.³⁸

Moreover, for all their human fallibility, councils were from the beginning, as Calvin put it, "the ordinary method of maintaining unity in the church whenever Satan began any machinations", as the examples of Nicaea, Constantinople (381) and Ephesus (431) illustrated.³⁹ But councils had no warrant to establish anything contrary to the scriptural Word, although that did not restrict their declarations solely to Scripture's explicit contents. In this area, Calvin's responses to Catholic opponents seem uncannily appropriate for Servetus's ears also. Elsewhere he will deal with the jibe that infant baptism rests not on Scripture but on church decree – for "it would be an utterly

³⁵ Cf. Bainton, *Hunted Heretic*, 32. In the *Restitutio* Servetus mentions Lorenzo Valla only critically: 55, 635.

³⁶ *Restitutio*, 670, from the end of *Signa Sexaginta Regni Antichristi*.

³⁷ *Institutio* 4:7:8 (OS V, 111-12), from 1543. Cf. similarly 4:7:10 (OS V, 113-14) on Constantine, bishop Miltiades of Rome and the Arles synod of 314.

³⁸ *Institutio* 4:9:10 (OS V, 158-9) from 1536.

³⁹ *Institutio* 4:9:13 (OS V, 161), from 1543.

wretched resort if we were compelled to take refuge in the bare authority of the church to defend infant baptism".⁴⁰ As for the objection that nowhere in Scripture do we find it affirmed that the Son is consubstantialem Patri,

This word, I admit, does not occur in Scripture. But since it is so often asserted there that God is one, and, secondly Christ is so often called true and eternal God, one with the Father, what else are the Nicene Fathers doing quum declarant esse unius substantiae, nisi quod nativum Scripturae sensum simpliciter enarrant?⁴¹

Furthermore, who was it who reminded the conciliar bishops that disputed questions should be resolved from the words of the Spirit in Scripture? None other than Constantine, according to Theodoret's Church History.⁴² In place of a glaring mistranslation in McNeill-Battles, Calvin's actual argument continued as follows:

At that time no one contested these pious admonitions. No one countered with the claim that the church was able to add something of its own, that the Spirit had not revealed all things to the apostles, or at least had not in writing handed down everything for posterity (vel saltem ad posteros non prodidisse), or some such point.⁴³

Since no bishops demurred at Nicaea, Constantine could not have been depriving them of an ecclesiastical authority to rule on issues independently of Scripture. This was Calvin's rejoinder in this context to Catholic controversialists. But to Servetus and similar Anabaptist Antitrinitarians he would have found it difficult to produce Emperor Constantine as the *deus ex machina* to vindicate the scriptural credentials of Nicaea's canonizing of consubstantiality.

Notwithstanding this particular difficulty, it is surely revealing of Calvin's mind that it is to Cochlaeus and his ilk that he develops this line of argument, and not to Servetus. The former represented an altogether more substantial

⁴⁰ *Institutio* 4:8:16 (OS V, 149-50), 1543.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ *Ibid.* The bracketed Latin gave me pause, but the whole statement, "Spiritus non omnia revelasse Apostolis, vel saltem ad posteros non prodidisse", I take not as a double negative but as envisaging a claim that the Spirit may have revealed everything to the apostles but did not so move them that everything they received was transmitted wholly in a written record.

opposition than Servetus. One senses that his heart was not in elaborating a sophisticated defence against Servetus. (Some of course would agree to the extent of claiming that his bile or his spleen was in it instead.) This would have involved mounting a case against the Servetan takeover of the pre-Nicenes and the Servetan notion of the Nicene *lapsus ecclesiae* into papal and imperial tyranny. If we are to believe those scholars who argue that Calvin had a special affinity for Irenaeus,⁴⁴ he declined to indulge it against Servetus. In his references to Servetus in the *Institutio* and scattered throughout his other works, Calvin very rarely brought Irenaeus into play. Even in the *Defensio Orthodoxae Fidei de Sacra Trinitate contra Prodigiosos Errores Michaelis Serveti Hispani* (1554) he can scarcely be said to display "an admirable knowledge of both Tertullian and Irenaeus", as Van Oort claims. More to the point is the same writer's recognition that "his extensive treatment is somewhat ad hoc".⁴⁵ In reality, it is not as an interpreter of Tertullian and Irenaeus that Calvin gains the upper hand in the trial of 1553, for he scarcely rises above responding to Servetus's interpretation of the ten Irenaeian passages or groups of passages which, as we have seen, constituted a main part of his response to the Genevans' thirtyeight charges. (None of these charges, by the way, raised his treatment of any Christian writer.) So Calvin's *Defensio* barely touched upon other reaches of Servetus's use of Irenaeus, for example, the numerous citations in the *Apologia* to Melanchthon, in response to the single statement from Irenaeus that Melanchthon advanced against Servetus.⁴⁶

Servetus did not offer tough opposition to a Calvin who was prepared to read Irenaeus through the lens of a more maturely developed dogmatic. We may look at a few examples. Servetus's third locus from Irenaeus is *Adversus*

⁴⁴ See the literature listed by Johannes van Oort, "John Calvin and the Church Fathers" (n. 30 above), 686 n. 50, including an essay by Irena Backus, "Irenaeus, Calvin and Calvinist Orthodoxy", shortly forthcoming in a new journal *Reformation and Renaissance Review*, sponsored by the (British) Society for Reformation Studies and published by Sheffield Academic Press.

⁴⁵ Van Oort, "John Calvin ...", 681.

⁴⁶ *Restitutio* 687. Melanchthon cited twice in his 1535 *Loci* (CR 21:263, 359) and again in the 1543 ff. editions (CR 21:622, where the reference should be corrected) Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* 3:20 (= 3:18:1, PG 7:932), affirming the identity of the *Logos* existing *in principio* with God, creator of all things and always present to the human race, with the one made possible human being and united with his own plasma in the last times at the Father's predetermined time. Servetus's response is snappy: "Quid haec contra me? Ipsissima est sententia mea." He must have been an infuriating partner in debate. Oecolampadius had cited a statement following on almost immediately from Melanchthon's choice.

Haereses 4:8 (in 1528, p. 211), where "a certain elder disciple of the apostles" is quoted as saying that "the unmeasured Father was once measured in the Son", and a little later Irenaeus says similarly that "the Father invisible in himself was seen (*esse visum*) in the Son".⁴⁷ Servetus added his gloss for Calvin's benefit:

In the very unmeasuredness (*immensitate*) and invisibility of the paternal light there appeared, stood out, was projected the visible form of the Son, consisting in a certain definite measure. And thus the Father, immeasurable in himself, was measured in the Son, just as the Father invisible in himself was rendered visible in the Word.⁴⁸

Calvin first quibbled at Servetus's assumption that Irenaeus's unidentified source (*Et bene, qui dixit*) was a disciple of the apostles, but thought better of pursuing this trifle. Servetus in fact knew that "Irenaeus quoted him *passim*, and everywhere commends him".⁴⁹ He once expressed the wish that "all the writings of the elders (*presbyterorum*) of the early period were extant", but took comfort from the "abundant sufficiency" of the divine writings.⁵⁰

On the Irenaeian text itself, Servetus's unsoundness, claimed Calvin, lay in transferring the word "measure", which there was used of the creation of the world, to the substance of Christ. Irenaeus explained himself just beforehand: "God does/makes (*facit*) everything in measure and order, and nothing is not measured with him, because nothing is disordered (*incompositum* – ? non-composite)". He added afterwards, "The Son is the measure of the Father because he also contains (*capit*) him".⁵¹

It is scarcely a coercive response. Servetus could rightly accuse Calvin of error, for Irenaeus "makes the transition from one thing (creation) to another (the substance of Christ)". Neither of the combatants was sensitive to the imagery of Irenaeus, but then the contrast of invisible and visible was intended literally. At this point Calvin was unable to damage the Servetan modalism that

⁴⁷ The first text is *Adv. Haer.* 4:4:2 (PG 7:982), the second (4:14, p. 215, in 1528 edition) is 4:6:6 (PG 7:989). In the *Defensio* in CO 8, Servetus's presentation of his patristic testimonies appears as a bloc followed (after his brief reply *seriatim* to the thirty-eight charges) by the ministers', i.e. Calvin's, reply one by one. In the *Register of the Company of Pastors* (see n. 26 above), each of Servetus's arguments from one of the Fathers is followed immediately by Calvin's response.

⁴⁸ CO 8:512.

⁴⁹ CO 8:531.

⁵⁰ *Restitutio* 672.

⁵¹ CO 8:531. The other Irenaeian texts are within *Adv. Haer.* 4:4:2 (PG 7:982).

envisaged the whole Father-God at one time unmeasured and invisible, at another measured and visible.

Servetus's fourth locus moves in related territory. Irenaeus quoted Isaiah 6:5, "I saw with my eyes the King, the Lord of hosts", and commented that "they (the prophets) used to see (videbant) the Son of God as a human being keeping company with other human beings". Shortly thereafter Irenaeus added that "the Word regularly spoke (loquebatur) to Moses, appearing before his eyes, just as one talks with a friend". Moses once longed to see that face which later he saw transfigured on the mount. Servetus contributes a unifying gloss: it was always the same face of Christ through which God was seen and now is seen.⁵²

Calvin's reply is brief. Irenaeus obviously teaches that the fathers of Israel by the prophetic Spirit saw as passible the Son of God who at that time was impassible. Was not Servetus again on good ground in accusing Calvin of brazenly refusing to see "that they are dealing there with the sight of a reality present at that time and placed there before their eyes?"⁵³ Calvin was not comfortable at Irenaeus's ability to encompass both Servetus's and his own main emphasis. In prophesying of what would happen, the prophets declared that the one who was not yet present was present and that the one who was still then in the heavens had descended into the dust of death.⁵⁴

The first testimony from Irenaeus advanced by Servetus was one that Oecolampadius had brought to his attention. It began on the same topic but delved more deeply. In Book 4:17, Irenaeus depicted the Jews as "gone astray in ignorance that the one who spoke in human form to Abraham, Aaron and Moses was the Son of God, the Word of God, Jesus himself, who had already formed man to his own image and was himself already the figuratio of God". Servetus has by now exceeded the bounds of Irenaeus's own words. The latter's message, he claims, is the human person in the Word, the effigies of a human being, to whose image and likeness the flesh of Adam was moulded.⁵⁵ Servetus refers for confirmation to another place in Irenaeus.⁵⁶ His distinctive teaching now emerges:

⁵² CO 8:512. The Irenaeian texts are in *Adv. Haer.* 4:37, p. 243, in 1528 = 4:20:8-9, PG 7:1038.

⁵³ CO 8:531.

⁵⁴ Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* 4:20:8 (PG 7:1038).

⁵⁵ CO 8:512, citing *Adv. Haer.* 4:17 (p. 217 in 1528) = 4:7:4 (PG 7:992).

⁵⁶ Cited at CO 8:512 simply as p. 268, wrongly for 298 (see CO 8:530), i.e. *Adv. Haer.* 5:6:1 (PG 7:1137-8).

The Word himself was the divine figuratio, which was at the same time both Word and Spirit, without real distinction. For in the very spiritual substance of the Father was stamped the figuratio and representation of the Word.⁵⁷

The disciplined exegete that was John Calvin made short shrift of this locus. It taught only that Jesus was the one who spoke in human form to the patriarchs. It was wholly illegitimate for Servetus to derive from it an eternal spectrum of a human being. In turn Servetus sharply retorted, "Do you think he was only a spectrum whenever he was seen? If God was not changing, that divine form persisted."⁵⁸ Calvin, however, displayed a fine reluctance to get drawn into discussing the more boldly speculative of Servetus's notions, not least, one supposes, because of the latter's versatility in absorbing criticism by fluid or inclusive use of language.

Servetus's seventh locus brought together seven references from Irenaeus in the cause of demonstrating that there was not realis distinctio in God. The seven fall into two categories. In one group, as Servetus understands him, Irenaeus presents God as totus Logos and totus Spiritus, the Logos as the Father. The second group of texts asserts that, in creating through his Word, God did not operate through some other entity but acted himself.⁵⁹ The last passage had the added gravitas for Servetus of having been learnt by Irenaeus from "disciples of the apostles". In fact, on this occasion Irenaeus seems not to be invoking the traditions of "the elders", whether oral or written (received by means of Papias, for example). Rather, having quoted Ephesians 4:5-6, 16, he urges that the Scriptures be diligently read apud eos qui in Ecclesia sunt presbyteri, apud quos est apostolica doctrina.

Again in response Calvin finds no need to breach his rule of lucid brevity. In this locus "Irenaeus teaches nothing except that the whole fullness of the Godhead is in the Son and the Spirit, so that unity of essence is established". The other texts contain nothing beyond the Father's creation of all things by his

⁵⁷ CO 8:512.

⁵⁸ CO 8:530.

⁵⁹ CO 8:513. In the first group: *Adv. Haer.* 2:18 (1528, p 24) = 2:13:8 (PG 7:747), 2:47, 48 (1528, pp. 117, 118) = 2:28:4, 5 (PG 7:808). In the second: *Adv. Haer.* 1:19 (1528, p. 41) = 1:22 (PG 7:669-70), 2:2 (1528, p. 66) = 2:2:4-5 (PG 7:714-15), 4:52 (1528, p. 263) = 4:32:1 (PG 7:1070-71).

Word.⁶⁰ Highly pertinent here would have been a cross-reference on Calvin's part to *Institutio* 1:13:27, which we noted above. As things are, the atomistic treatment of individual passages in the 1553 proceedings can hardly have impressed Servetus. Calvin probably counted all his efforts wasted labour against such an abandoned opponent.

Having surveyed the inconclusive exchanges over Irenaeian testimonies alleged by Servetus, we finally note four brought forward by Calvin, "so that the immense despite (iniuriam) Servetus does to Irenaeus may be evident to everyone". The first, reinforced by the second, emphasizes the Son's receiving "the substance of the flesh" from a human being. Since we are a body taken from earth and a soul receiving spirit from God, all confess that this too the Word of God was made, "recapitulating his own plasma in himself".⁶¹ Van Oort has noted that Calvin does not pick up Irenaeus's theme of recapitulation.⁶² At any rate, this was not the place for Calvin to develop his understanding of it. Servetus was unfazed by Calvin's texts, which were directed, so he claimed, against denial of Christ's flesh by the magi. With brazen inconsistency he also accused Calvin of denying "this deity of the soul" along with Simon Magus.⁶³

Calvin's second pair of statements from Irenaeus refuted Servetus's fatuous fabrication of the eternity of a visible substance and established the eternal hypostasis of the Son. "All who prophesied from the beginning had the revelation from the Son himself, who in the last times was made visible and passible." And again, "For always present with God are his Word and Wisdom, the Son and the Spirit, through and in both of whom he freely made all things."⁶⁴ Neither of these proved troublesome to Servetus.

In conclusion, we may agree with Johannes van Oort that Calvin's "theological conformity with Irenaeus does indeed deserve a separate inquiry".⁶⁵ His wrangle with Servetus over selected texts of the early Father counts neither for nor against a special affinity. Servetus emerges as the sixteenth-century

⁶⁰ CO 8:532.

⁶¹ CO 8:533. *Adv. Haer.* 3:[32] (1528, p. 192) = 3:22:1 (PG 7:956). Since this passage is mutilated at the end, Calvin cites 4:[14] (1528, p. 214) = 4:6:2 (PG 7:987).

⁶² Van Oort, "John Calvin ...", 686.

⁶³ CO 8:533. Hughes's translation of the Register's text has "death of the soul" (op. cit., 249). The Latin is *deitatem* in both places.

⁶⁴ CO 8:533; *Adv. Haer.* 4:16 (1528, p. 216) = 4:7:2 (PG 7:991), 4:37 (1528, p. 239) = 4:20:1 (PG 7:1032).

⁶⁵ Van Oort, "John Calvin ...", 686.

writer who perhaps made greater use of Irenaeus than any of his contemporaries. Although at first sight Tertullian may have seemed to offer Servetus stronger patronage, with his understanding of the second person becoming Son only in the unfolding of the economy, Irenaeus's more image-rich and less ordered Trinitarianism provided Servetus with promising footholds. Calvin did not have Irenaeus all his own way. It was Tertullian, not Irenaeus, that he owned as *totus noster*.⁶⁶

⁶⁶ CO 9:410.

A SURVEY OF THE HISTORY OF CHRISTIANITY IN ROMANIA FROM THE BEGINNING OF THE PROTESTANT REFORMATION UNTIL THE END OF THE 19th CENTURY

Paul Negruț

1. Introduction

The end of the 15th century found a Europe divided between the Eastern Byzantine, Western Catholic communities and a growing Muslim community. The Byzantine Empire that for nearly a millennium had been a leader in civilization and a bulwark of Christendom against invasion from the East, was now succumbing to the Ottoman attack.¹ The Muslim Turks captured Constantinople (May 29, 1453) and were advancing into Europe. Already the Balkan Peninsula was under Turkish rule, and the Greek Church became subject to the Muslim Sultan.² In 1454 Sultan Mohamed II appointed Gennadios Scholarios as Patriarch of Constantinople.³ This inaugurated the dependence of the Byzantine Church on the Muslim Turks. Each newly elected Patriarch had to be recognized by the Sultan. The Eastern Orthodox Church accepted the political subjection to Muslim rulers and from the end of the 16th century, alongside with the sums of money that the Patriarchs paid for their recognition, the Church had to pay an annual tax.⁴ To cover such large sums of money the Ecumenical Patriarchate introduced the practice of selling the ecclesiastical offices. That meant that bribery often entered into the appointments and that those elected owed their position not so much to their spiritual qualities as to their willingness to co-operate with their leaders and Muslim officials.⁵ Western

¹ K.S. Latourette, *A History of The Expansion of Christianity*, vol.3 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan,1970),3.

² Ibid., 3.

³ H. Jedin and J. Dolan (eds). *History of the Church. The Church in the Age of Absolutism and Enlightenment*, vol. 6 (London: Burns and Oates, 1981), 209.

⁴ Ibid., 209.

⁵ Latourette, *A History of the Expansion of Christianity. Three Centuries of Advance*, vol. 3 (Grand

Europe was characterized by division and jealousies between competing powers, and consequently it was impossible to form a united front against the invaders.⁶ Western Christianity was suffering from internal weaknesses, and Rome was no longer the political leader of the West.

In this depressive atmosphere created by the collapse of the Byzantine Empire and the disintegration of the western world, a new spirit started to move in Europe. The people started to read books from the pre-Christian culture of the Greco-Roman world. The power of the human mind and body was rediscovered and exalted. Geographically, Vasco da Gama, Columbus and Magellan opened the ways toward new lands. Copernicus and later Galileo discovered a new heaven, and demonstrated that the earth is a tiny planet, spinning around a great sun. There was, also, remarkable progress made in the fields of mathematics, physics, mechanics, zoology, anatomy, etc. The invention of the printing press by John Gutenberg was epoch making. One other great step that was made at this time was the founding of universities in all the countries of Western Europe.⁷ In Germany from 1450 to 1517, nine new academies were started. During the same period, three new universities were founded in France, seven in Spain, one in Hungary, one in Sweden, and one in Denmark. Important changes also took place economically where the old feudal, manorial, and agricultural structure had long been disintegrating. The transition from a society in which payments were made chiefly by exchange of goods to one in which money was both the agent of exchange and standard of value, led to the increase of production and wealth. This has been in large part the cause of the rise of bourgeoisie, nationalism and individualism.⁸ The bourgeoisie, as the new class of the cities, was open to culture, arts, philosophy and new religious movements. From a political point of view, we see during this time the development of strong national states with powerful monarchs, who tried to extend their control over the Church within their realms.⁹ The decline of the Catholic Church and the moral corruption of the clergy, generated attempts at spiritual renewal from other groups within the Church. At the beginning of the 16th century the western world was confronted by three major movements: the

Rapids: Zondervan, 1970), 443.

⁶ Ibid., 3.

⁷ P. Smith, *The Age of The Reformation* (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1950), 11.

⁸ Ibid., 5.

⁹ Latourette, *A History of the Expansion of Christianity*, 6.

end of the Renaissance, the rise of Capitalism and the beginning of the Protestant Reformation.¹⁰

2. The Protestant Reformation and the Romanian Principalities

At the beginning of the 16th century Transylvania was a vassal state of the Ottoman Turks, but in spite of paying tribute to the Sultan, it was allowed to maintain its links with the western world. Because of those links, the new developments in the area of culture, philosophy and religion found their way into Transylvania. The principalities of Moldavia and Wallachia also had to pay tribute to the Turks but were more isolated from the western world and dominated by the Byzantine culture.

Of a special interest for this study is the expansion of the Protestant Reformation into the Romanian Principalities. From a religious point of view, the Romanian population belonged to the Orthodox faith and the ethnic minorities (German and Hungarian) belonged to the Roman Catholic Church. The 16th century brought the encounter between Protestantism and Catholicism on one side and between Protestantism and Orthodoxy on the other side.

During the previous five centuries, since the official schism between the Catholic and Orthodox churches (1054), there was but little success of either church in converting the other's members. But because the Protestant movement experienced a rapid growth by reaching out into the Catholic Church, one might expect the same success in the countries with Orthodox population. However, the fact is that there was very limited impact of the Protestant Reformation on the Orthodox Church in the Romanian principalities. Instead, it had significant success in converting the Catholic population of Transylvania.

How can these phenomena be explained? Is Orthodoxy deeper and stronger than the Protestant faith? And, therefore is very difficult, if not impossible, to convert an Orthodox to Protestantism? Were the Protestants interested to reach out the Romanian Orthodox? If yes, were the missionary methods appropriate? Were the socio-political circumstances favorable for the spread of the Protestant faith among the Orthodox? Why were the Protestants so effective in reaching out the Catholics in Transylvania?

¹⁰ Smith, *The Age of the Reformation*, 4.

Transylvania

After the battle of Mohacs in 1526, when the Turks defeated Hungary, Transylvania under the rule of prince Ioan Zapolya (1526-1540) became and remained vassal state of the Turks¹¹ until 1699.¹² Transylvania was fragmented ethnically into Magyars, Saxons, Szeklers and Wallachs (or Romanians).¹³ From a religious point of view the Magyars, Saxons and Szeklers were Catholic and the Romanians were Orthodox. The initial steps of the Reformation into Transylvania were ethnically conditioned.

The Saxons

They came into Transylvania during the 12th century. The privileges that were given to them at their arrival by the Hungarian kings, were taken away from them by the Magyar nobles and Catholic bishops.¹⁴ Because of the political problems with the Magyars, the Saxons enjoyed close ties with Germany. Luther's writings reached Sibiu (Hermanstadt) in 1519, and his ideas of *The Freedom of the Christian Man* and the *Universal Priesthood of Believers* rapidly caught fire in the hearts of the Saxon settlers. Among the first who accepted Protestantism were the scholars and the civic leaders of the Saxons in Transylvania. The leader of the Reformation among the Saxons was Johannes Honterius (1498-1549), under the protection of the city patron Johannes Fux.

Honterius traveled to Basel and studied under the Basel reformer, Oecolampadius. When Honterius came back to Transylvania he established himself at Cluj (Kronstadt) and in 1533 he revitalized the school system by publishing and printing many textbooks. Honterius followed the principles of the Wittenberg Reformation, because he felt that Luther's position was more firmly grounded in the Scripture than that of the Swiss reformers.¹⁵ In the early 1540's, Honterius was cited before the diet of Weissemburg to answer for his work. Johannes Fuchs, the city judge, and Jeremias Jeckel, the city pastor, were sent in his place and Honterius' position won over the governor and clergy.¹⁶ In

¹¹ Euan Cameron, *The European Reformation* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), 279.

¹² Nicolae Iorga, *Istoria poporului românesc* (București: Editura Științifică și Enciclopedică, 1985), 470.

¹³ Ibid., 278.

¹⁴ J. Bodensieck, *The Encyclopedia of the Lutheran Church*, vol. 3 (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1965), 2408.

¹⁵ Ibid. 2408-2409.

¹⁶ Cameron, *The European Reformation*, 279.

1542 Honterius reformed the liturgy, in 1543 he produced a draft of the Church ordinance at the Estates of Transylvania and in 1544 the Saxons accepted the Augsburg Confession.¹⁷

The Protestant Saxons had to face the problem of state-church relationship, especially with the Catholic dominated, state of Transylvania. To address this issue, Honterius wrote the *Apologia Reformationis* in which he explained his position as a reformer. Here he introduced the idea of the authority of God, and declared that one must obey God rather than man (Acts 5:29).¹⁸

One other problem of the newly converted Protestants was the role and the place of icons and saints in the life of the believer. Honterius supported the removal of the altar and pictures from the churches in Cluj by iconoclasts and he campaigned for *sola Scriptura*. Honterius succeeded in converting the city pastor from Sibiu, to the Reformation, and at the synod at Mediaș 1545, the two Saxon dioceses united to form one body – "The Church Order for the Germans of Transylvania".

Honterius' work was continued by Paul Wiener (1550-1572), who had been driven from his home in Ljubljana for his Protestant faith, and came to Transylvania, where he was elected bishop of the Saxon Church. Paul Wiener was succeeded in 1556 by another great reformer, Mathias Hebler. Mathias Hebler was personally acquainted with Luther. He enrolled at Wittenberg in 1546, and was ordained by Bugenhagen in 1553, expressly for Sibiu. Hebler was well trained in the Lutheran faith and he opposed Calvinism which was creeping in from Hungary.

In 1561 at the synod in Medias, professor Tilemann from Heidelberg was invited to present the Lutheran "Confession of the Holy Supper of the Lord Jesus Christ". The synod also requested four German universities – Wittenberg, Leipzig, Rostock and Frankfurt on the Oder – to render an opinion on the Lutheran-Calvinist dispute, and all four of them approved Bishop Hebler's "Short Confession Concerning the Lord's Supper".

In 1572 at the synod in Mediaș the Augsburg Confession was formally accepted, each Saxon pastor taking a solemn oath.¹⁹ Hebler was also very successful in safeguarding the rights of the church over against the government.

¹⁷ Ibid., 279.

¹⁸ Bodensieck, *The Encyclopedia*, 2409.

¹⁹ Ibid., 2409.

After Hebler's death in September 18, 1571, just a few months before the Augsburg Confession was accepted, the synod elected Lukas Unglerus to succeed Hebler.

Unglerus studied with Melanchthon, and when he wrote the summary of the most important article of the Lutheran faith to be presented to the Sovereign, Unglerus followed the spirit of Melanchthon in the articles on Law and Gospel, justification by faith, good works, the free will and predestination, and in the articles on Communion he followed Hebler.²⁰

By this time the Augsburg Confession was completely accepted by the Saxon Church in Transylvania, and they did not deviate from it in the following centuries. Under the influence of the Protestant Reformation, the Transylvanian Saxons founded schools and encouraged printing and publishing of Protestant literature. Those schools were instrumental in maintaining the links with the German schools and to facilitate the penetration of western culture and philosophy into Transylvania.

The Hungarians and Szeklers

After the defeat of the Hungarian King Luis II by the Turks at the battle of Mohacs in 1526, one part of the Magyar nobility elected Ferdinand of Habsburg as his successor in the hope that his brother Emperor Charles V would protect them from further assaults from the Turks. The other part, more nationalistic, elected the Hungarian John Zapolya in Transylvania. For eight years, Zapolya's prime minister was Jerome Lasky, the brother of the well-known Erasmian-Reformer, John Lasky (1499-1560)²¹, nephew of the primate of Poland. Zapolya had married Isabelle, the daughter of King Sigismund I of Poland and his son John Sigismund Zapolya (1540-1571) succeeded him as king of Transylvania. Francis David became his court chaplain. The strong links of Transylvania with Hungary, Poland and Germany, created the conditions for an early spread of the Lutheran ideas among the Hungarian and Szeklers. The Hungarians followed the Saxons in adopting the Lutheran faith and very soon some strong Hungarian leaders emerged.

In 1530 Johannes Sylvester established a school and a printing house in Ujsziget. He printed a Grammar and New Testament in Hungarian.²² In 1540's

²⁰ Ibid., 2410.

²¹ G. H. Williams, *The Radical Reformation* (The Westminster Press, 1961), 708.

²² Cameron, *The European Reformation*, 279.

emerged a group of very influential Magyar protestant leaders: the preacher Matyas Devai Biro (1504-1545), the theologian and pedagogue Istvan Szegedi Kis (or Stephanus Szegedinus, 1502-1575), the preacher and hymn-writer Mihaly Sztarai (1500-1575); and two Hungarian-speaking Transylvanians of German descent, Kaspar Heltay and Ferenc David (1510-1579), who were very effective in the conversion of the Magyar population to Lutheranism.

The three Transylvanian nations (Saxons, Szeklers, and Hungarians) were united in one Lutheran Church, under a general superintendent, or bishop, but divided in two sections: German-speaking (Saxons) and Hungarian-speaking (Magyars and Szeklers).²³ The Protestant movement was so strong in Transylvania that in 1556 the Catholic bishop had to leave the country and for a century and a half his see remained vacant.²⁴ However, Magyar Lutheranism was very soon influenced by the Swiss interpretation of the Communion and for a while even some Saxons were influenced by a more moderate position favored by Melanchthon. Peter Petrovics was a leading figure of the royal council in Transylvania, and being a strong Calvinist he was very instrumental in the spread of the Helvetic faith. The Calvinist sacramentarian sentiment took roots rapidly among the Hungarians, partly because it was not German.

After a period of confrontations between the Lutherans and Calvinists in Transylvania and Hungary, at the synod of Debrecen in 1567, the Hungarians adopted the second Helvetic Confession.²⁵ During 1560's and 1570's the Calvinist in Transylvania split into Orthodox reformed, who wanted to follow exactly the Swiss faith, and a more free-thinking group.

The Romanians

They had few possibilities to establish a corporate Romanian life in Transylvania, because of the barbarian invasions and the Hungarian occupation of the land during the 11th century. When, finally the Hungarians conquered Transylvania, the Romanians lost both their properties and freedom in favor of the Hungarian nobles.²⁶ Since that time most of them were serfs, but some achieved Hungarian nobility. The Orthodox faith of the Romanians was persecuted, and the Church was not very well organized, because the papacy pressed the

²³ Williams, *The Radical Reformation*, 711.

²⁴ Ibid., 711.

²⁵ Cameron, *The European Reformation*, 280.

²⁶ A. Grabois, *The Illustrated Encyclopedia of Medieval Civilization* (Mayflower: Octopus, 1980), 676.

Hungarian kings to suppress the schism on their territory.²⁷ Therefore, to the Orthodox it was denied the right to have a metropolitan and the bishops led a precarious existence.

In 1456, Ioan, the Orthodox bishop at Hunedoara was removed by John Capistro, the papal inquisitor, and taken to Rome.²⁸ From a social and political point of view the Romanians were considered second-class citizens,²⁹ and their possibilities to have connections with the western world were very limited. Being oppressed by the German and Hungarian nobles and clergy, there was very little opening among the Romanians toward either Catholic or Protestant faith.

After the success of the Reformation in Transylvania the religions that were subsequently "received" were: Catholic, Lutheran and Calvinist. The Orthodox religion was "tolerated". From a political point of view the liberties were granted to the three nations (Saxons, Szeklers and Hungarian), but there were no concession made to the Romanians.³⁰

The first results of the Reformation among the Romanians were seen in the area of culture. Certain attempts to convert the Romanian to Protestantism led to the translation of the Lutheran catechism in the Romanian language in 1544 at Sibiu.³¹ Also, deacon Coresi, influenced by the protestant writings, and understanding the importance of the vernacular, translated the book of Psalms into Romanian. He also produced more than 22 religious works between 1557-1588.³² The first Romanian writings from the 15th-16th centuries used the Cyrillic alphabet, but under the influence of the Hussites and Protestants the Latin alphabet was introduced gradually. This was a very important step toward the liberation from the Slavonic influence. There are no records about a significant response of the Romanians from Transylvania to the Protestant faith during the 16th century.

²⁷ Eric Tappe, "The Romanian Orthodox Church and the West" in Derek Baker (ed.), *Studies in Church History*, vol. 13 (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1976), 281.

²⁸ *Istoria bisericii române: manual pentru institutetele teologice* (Bucuresti, 1957), 99-100.

²⁹ Tappe, "The Romanian", 281.

³⁰ [C]hamber's [E]ncyclopaedia, vol. 13 (London: George Newnes LTD, 1964), 752.

³¹ Tappe, "The Romanian", 281.

³² [N]ew [C]atholic [E]ncyclopedia, vol. 12 (New York: McGraw Hill Book Co., 1968), 717.

Moldavia

During the second part of the 15th century and the beginning of the 16th century, Moldavia had a flourishing time under the Prince Stephan the Great (1457-1504). He was a valiant defender of Christianity, and he managed to stop the advancement of the Turks North of Danube. Pope Sixtus IV called Prince Stephan an "athlete of Christ".³³ Under Stephan protection the Orthodox Church in Moldavia experienced a time of prosperity. The Prince gave large gifts to the Church and helped her to build a significant number of monasteries, which became important centers for the religious and cultural life.

The Catholics in Moldavia traced their roots from the work of the Franciscan and Dominican missionaries during the 13th century.³⁴ But, the relatively small impact of the Catholics in Moldavia is due to the fact that the bishops were either Polish or Hungarians and they only visited those places from time to time. Also, from a political perspective, both Poland and Hungary were a threat for the sovereignty of Moldavia. However, in 1370 Lațcu, the prince of Moldavia, struggling to keep the country independent of Poland and Hungary, and being influenced by two Franciscan missionaries appealed to pope Urban V, promising his own conversion and that of his own people.³⁵

In 1371, Siret became a city with a Catholic bishop see, directly dependent on Rome.³⁶ But, Lațcu's decision was not followed by the people, and besides the Saxon and Hungarian colonists, there were very few Romanians, mainly from the towns, that accepted the Catholic faith. The ground for the Reformation in Moldavia has been prepared by the spread of the Hussites and their ideas into Bohemia, Hungary, Poland and Moldavia during the 15th century.³⁷ For the first time, under the influence of the Hussites, the Bible was translated into Romanian language³⁸, and circulated in the Northeastern parts of Transylvania and Moldavia. Other religious books were translated into Romanian, in order to reach the Romanian population. The book of Psalms was found at Scheia by Asachi and it is known as *Psaltirea scheiană*, and a copy of the

³³ NCE, vol. 12, 715.

³⁴ Ibid., 714.

³⁵ Baker, *Studies in Church History*, 280.

³⁶ Ibid., 280.

³⁷ G. R. Elton (ed.) *The New Cambridge Modern History; The Reformation 1520-1559*, vol. 2 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 204.

³⁸ Iorga, *Istoria românilor* (București, 1920), 152.

Book of Acts was found at Voroneț and is known as *Codicele voronețean*.³⁹ This was the first attempt to replace the Slavonic language with the Romanian language.

The Protestant ideas were spread in Moldavia among the Saxons and Hungarians, from the early 1530's. There are records about a large number of Catholics who were converted to Lutheranism and Calvinism between 1530 and 1580.⁴⁰ For a short period of time Moldavia had a protestant prince, named "despot Iacob Heraclid". He was born on the island of Samos, studied in France, had been converted to Lutheranism and traveled through Germany, Scandinavia and finally to Poland. Claiming relationship with the wife of the Moldavian prince Alexandru Lapușneanu (1552-1561 and 1564-1568), he moved to Moldavia. In 1561 with the support from the Habsburg Emperor Ferdinand, the protestant noble Albert Laski and from Polish troops, Iacob Heraclid overthrown Lapușneanu and sized the throne of Moldavia. Then, the despot brought to Moldova a protestant bishop from Poland, Lusinski. Before long the despot alienated his supporters and in 1563 he was murdered, and Lapușneanu returned to the throne.⁴¹

The Lutheran confession translated into Romanian language in Transylvania was spread among the Lutherans in Moldavia and after on this confession was attacked by the Orthodox bishops. The Protestant Church in Moldavia was not as strong and well organized as in Transylvania.

Wallachia

The principality of Wallachia succeeded to withstand the invasion of the Turks for a short period of time during the rule of Mircea the Great. After the successful confrontation at Kosovo 1389 and Nicopolis 1396, Mircea was forced to submit to the sovereignty of the Porte in 1412. There was one other attempt to overthrow the Turkish dominion during the reign of Prince Vlad IV, in 1456. After few years of independence, in 1462, Vlad was defeated and fled to Hungary. The country became a vassal state to the Turks.⁴²

³⁹ G. Călinescu, *Istoria literaturii române de la origini până în prezent* (București: Editura Minerva, 1965), 7.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 281.

⁴¹ Ibid., 282.

⁴² Sir A. W. Ward, Sir G. W. Prothero, Sir S. Leathes (eds.), *The Cambridge Modern History: The Renaissance*, vol.1 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1943), 82-83.

The political relationships of Wallachia were limited at that time, mainly to Hungary, Moldavia and the Ottoman Turks. The Hungarian and Saxon exiles from different parts of the Austrian Empire, settled in Bucharest, were in touch with the German and Hungarian communities from Transylvania and were influenced by Protestant ideas. In 1550 a Lutheran church was founded in Bucharest.⁴³ The Lutheran congregation that still exists in Bucharest in our days was founded in 1690.⁴⁴ The Romanian speaking people were not reached by the Protestant movement which remained mainly the religion of the German and Hungarian immigrants.

3. The Radical Reformation

The confrontation between different groups that sprung from the initial Reformation has been reflected into Romanian principalities to a smaller degree. Some of them disappeared over the years, but others still exist as well established groups.

Unitarianism

The free-thinking group of the Hungarian Calvinists began to reject the traditional understanding of the Trinity and to question the relationship between God the Father and Christ. Under the influence of Italian immigrants Francesco Stancaro and Giorgio Blandrata the ideas that limited the participation of Christ in the Godhead, took roots rapidly in Poland.

In 1554 Stancaro visited Transylvania and became a court physician to the prince. Immediately he started to spread his anti-Trinitarian ideas, but was publicly attacked by Ferenc David in Cluj.⁴⁵ Unitarian doctrine would not have made such a progress in Transylvania, but for the leadership of Giorgio Blandrata (1515-1588), who was a court physician to the Queen Bona of Poland, of Queen Isabelle of Transylvania and of her son John Sigismund.⁴⁶ Ferenc David was the court preacher to Sigismund at Alba Iulia (Gyulafehérvár), and interacting very often with Blandrata, he was converted to the later ideas.⁴⁷

⁴³ Bodensieck, *The Encyclopedia*, 2071

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 2071.

⁴⁵ Cameron, *The European Reformation*, 331.

⁴⁶ Williams, *The Radical Reformation*, 716.

⁴⁷ Cameron, *The European Reformation*, 332.

Thereafter the reformed Church of Transylvania moved toward formal Unitarianism.

In 1567 Blandrata and David replaced the Calvinist catechism with an Arian one. On January 1568 a royal edict extended formal religious toleration for the Unitarian, Trinitarian, Lutheran and Catholic churches.⁴⁸ A large part of the Hungarian Calvinists were converted to Unitarianism, and from about 1569 under the leadership of Ferenc David and Gaspar Heltai, Unitarianism became the most powerful protestant creed in Transylvania.⁴⁹ The Unitarian faith was not effectively spread into the other Romanian principalities, but remained primarily a religion of the Hungarian and Szeklers in Transylvania.

Mennonites

When the Hutterites were persecuted by the rising power of the Catholic Austria, Gabor Bethlen, Prince of Transylvania offered the refuge in his principality. In 1622 they settled at Alwinz (Vinț) in Transylvania and were given by the prince land and vineyards.⁵⁰ In 1623 another group of exiled Hutterites from Moravia joined them and enduring the persecution they survived until 1767. In 1755 the Hutterites offered shelter to a persecuted group of Lutherans and subsequently the Lutherans were converted to the Bruderhof. Their leaders were Joseph Kuhr, Johannes Stahl and Johannes Waldner. During the time spent at Alwinz they corresponded with the Dutch Mennonites.

The severe Catholic persecution during the Counter-Reformation forced them to move to Wallachia and then through Moldavia into Ukraine, where Count Romanzov offered them a place to live.⁵¹ The Hutterites did not have the opportunity to settle down for a long period of time and to interact with the Romanian-speaking people, therefore there are no records about Romanian Mennonites.

4. Post-Reformation and Counter-Reformation 1600-1859

Historical background

Following the reign of Mircea the Old (1386-1416) in Wallachia, Stephan the

⁴⁸ Williams, *The Radical Reformation*, 719.

⁴⁹ Cameron, *The European Reformation*, 332.

⁵⁰ *The Mennonite Encyclopedia*, vol. 1 (Mennonite Brethren Publishing House, 1969), 83.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 83.

Great (1456-1504) in Moldavia and Ioan Zapolya (1526-1540) in Transylvania, the Romanian Principalities became vassal states to the Ottoman Turks. During the first part of Turkish domination, the princes for the principalities were elected by each principality and were confirmed by the Porte. Later on, the Porte appointed the princes from among the legal successors of the ruling families. In the last part of the Turkish dominion, the princes were appointed by the Sultan from the reach and influential Greek families from Phanar, Constantinople.⁵²

Transylvania escaped this painful and humiliating process due to the Hungarian and Austrian influence. The political status of the Principalities was decided to a large degree by the balance of the "Great Powers" (Ottoman Empire, Poland, Hungary, Austria and from the second part of the 17th century Russia, France, England and Germany). The big political decisions were made by the Powers and usually imposed on the Romanian Principality.

From a religious point of view, there were a plurality of religions in each principality, and in this time religion became a very important element for the national identity. The spread of one faith or the other is no more a pure religious problem, but more and more a political problem. Also, because of this aspect, the different churches had a growing impact on the policy making body of each principality. The development of the religious life, was also, influenced in a positive way by the flourishing monastic life and the spreading of the Christian literature. The gradual penetration of the Western culture into the Principalities also had a positive effect on the religious and political life of the Romanian Principalities. Within this general framework, however, each principality had its own, specific evolution and/or devolution, and it is very important to focus on the specific situation of Christianity in each principality.

Transylvania

After the election of Prince Stephen Bathory of Transylvania (1571-1576) as King of Poland (the 11th of December 1575), the throne of Transylvania was occupied by Stephen's brother, Christoph, until 1581, and then by Sigismund Bathory, his son, until 1599. Sigismund had been trained in a Jesuit school, and when he became prince of Transylvania, his dream was to form a strong Christian coalition against the Turks.⁵³ Since 1570, the Pope had been interested again

⁵² Constantin C. Giurescu, *Istoria românilor* (Bucuresti, 1942), 306-307.

⁵³ Iorga, *Istoria poporului românesc* (Bucureşti: Editura Ştiinţifică şi Enciclopedică, 1985), 431.

about the situation of the Christian in the East and sent a special envoy to the princes of Moldavia and Wallachia asking them to join Sigismund Bathory in the Crusade against the Turks.⁵⁴

Because the war was long and difficult, Sigismund ceded his throne to a Catholic Cardinal, Andrew, who signed a treaty with the Turks. This turn around in the policy of Transylvania created a great problem for the prince of Wallachia, Michael the Brave (1593-1601), who had risked everything in this war.⁵⁵

In 1599, Michael conquered Transylvania, and when Sigismund, who fled to Poland, moved to Suceava in Moldavia to influence the prince of Moldavia against Wallachia, Michael conquered Moldavia as well, in 1600.⁵⁶ Michael succeeded for a short time (1601) to unite the Romanian Principalities. This event fired the imagination of the Romanian people and planted the seed of aspirations towards national unity.⁵⁷

During his reign, Michael obtained from Emperor Rudolf the status of recognized religion for the Orthodox Church in Transylvania. Subsequently, the bishop of Transylvania became the Metropolitan of Alba-Iulia, and the Emperor issued a decree about the officially received religions in Transylvania: Orthodoxy, Catholicism and Lutheranism.⁵⁸ In return, Michael protected the Catholics in Wallachia.

Michael was murdered in 1601, and with that the hope of the religious freedom for the Orthodox Church in Transylvania came to an end until the time of Gabor Bethlen. The Protestants had a very prosperous time under the rule of Calvinist prince, Gabor Bethlen (1613-1629). He was the first protestant ruler who made an attempt to convert the Romanian population to the Protestant faith. Bethlen encouraged the printing in vernacular and the development of the Romanian schools. Also, he restored the properties of the Orthodox churches and clergy and exempted them from taxes.⁵⁹

In 1627, Bethlen appointed an Orthodox monk, Ghenadie, as the archbishop of the Orthodox Church in Transylvania under the following

⁵⁴ Iorga, *Istoria românilor*, (București: Cultura Neamului Romanesc, 1920), 214-215.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 229.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 232-233.

⁵⁷ *Chambers' Encyclopedia*, vol. 12 (London, 1964), 52.

⁵⁸ Tappe, "The Romanians", 283.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 283.

conditions: subordination to the Calvinist superintendent; to introduce the Romanian language for the church services and printed books; to root out the superstitions. In 1629, Bethlen wrote to the Patriarch of Constantinople, Cyril Lukaris (1624-1638) and asked him to help in the conversion of the Orthodox in Transylvania to Calvinism.⁶⁰ Lukaris replied that thought he could do nothing to prevent their conversion, he would commit an unforgivable sin to support in.⁶¹ In the same year Bethlen died, and his successor, Gyorgy Rakoczy, continued the same policy.

Because archbishop Ghenadie refused to print and spread Calvinistic books, Rakoczy got two Romanian priests to translate and print a Calvinist catechism.⁶² Ghenadie died in 1640, and his successor also refused to spread Calvinist teaching and very soon he was imprisoned. During the reign of the Protestant princes, the Protestant movement continued to maintain its influence, but their fragmentation and internal struggles had already weakened the movement.

The Counter Reformation. The Uniates

After the siege of Vienna in 1683, the Turks started to loose their influence in Southeastern Europe. In 1690 Austria liberated Transylvania from Turkish dominion, and from 1696 Transylvania became part of the Habsburg Empire. Under the rule of Catholic Austria, the Jesuits who had been expelled by the protestant princes returned to Cluj and Alba-Iulia and began to work among the Romanians. The Emperor Leopold confirmed the right of the three nations (Hungarian, Saxon, Szekely) and of four receive religions (Catholic, Lutheran, Calvinist and Unitarian). The Romanians were considered second-class citizens and their Orthodox religion "tolerated".⁶³ The economic and social conditions of the Romanian in Transylvania were very poor. They were overburden with

⁶⁰ Cyril Lukaris was influenced by the Protestant writings, especially of Calvin, and tried to reform the Orthodox Church. In 1629 he published in Geneva *Confessio fidei*. He embraced the doctrine of *sola scriptura*, denied the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist, expressed regret at the veneration of icons, and call the invocation of saints idolatry. Lukaris dreamed to created a united front of Orthodox and Calvinist and to fight against Rome. Also, he had close relationship with the western diplomacy. Jedin and Dolan (eds.) *History of the Church*, vol. 6 (London: Burns & Oates, 1981), 210-211; Tappe, "The Romanians", 283; George H. Williams. "New England Puritan Interest in the Christian East" in *Andover Newton Quarterly* 15/4 (1975), 268-269.

⁶¹ Tappe, "The Romanians", 282.

⁶² Ibid., 283.

⁶³ Ibid., 284.

taxes, deprived of civil rights and their Orthodox faith was spurned.⁶⁴

In 1696 the Jesuit Baranyi published a Catholic catechism in Romanian and in 1698 Leopold issued a decree, promising that the privileges of the four religions would be granted to those who joined one of them and in particular those who acknowledged the pope as the head of the Church would enjoy the privileges of the Catholic clergy.⁶⁵

The result was that bishop Teofil accepted the union, but he died that summer (1697). His successor, Atanasie Anghel, went to Wallachia to be consecrated by the metropolitan, and he was received with suspicion. He was consecrated only after he swore to preserve Orthodoxy as defined by Petru Movilă⁶⁶ in his confession of the Orthodox faith.

On that occasion Atanasie met Dositheus, the Patriarch of Jerusalem who was living in Wallachia at that time, and received instructions from him concerning the danger of the Catholic invasion.⁶⁷ In June 1698 Kollonics, the primate of Hungary, informed the Orthodox priests of the four points that they would have to accept if they became united: the pope as the head of the church, the use of unleavened bread for the Eucharist, the *filioque* clause in the creed and the doctrine of the purgatory.⁶⁸

In 1698 during the synod of the Romanian Orthodox clergy, 38 protopopes signed the document for the union with Rome together with 1563 priests. Following the decision of the Romanian priests, Leopold published in the same year a diploma formally establishing the Romanian Uniate church, with tax exemption for its properties and that of its priests.⁶⁹ On the 5th of September 1700 at the synod chaired by Atanasie Anghel, 54 protopopes and 1563 priests⁷⁰ ratified the union, accepted the four dogmatic points, but in liturgical and disciplinary matters, they kept their own rite. Also the synod was authorized to

⁶⁴ NCE, vol. 12, 720; Tappe, "The Romanians", 284; Iorga, *Istoria poporului românesc* (București: Editura Științifică și Enciclopedică, 1985), 540-542.

⁶⁵ Iorga, *Istoria poporului românesc*, 542; Tappe, "The Romanians", 285.

⁶⁶ Petru Movilă was the son of a ruling Moldavian family. He tried to seize the throne of Moldavia, but failed and then he decided to become a monk. Later he became the metropolitan of Kiev and played a very important role in refuting the confession written by Lukaris, and also fought the catholic influence in the Orthodox world. Iorga, *Istoria românilor*, 250.

⁶⁷ Iorga, *Istoria poporului românesc*, 542 and Tappe, "The Romanians", 284.

⁶⁸ Giurescu, *Istoria românilor*, 327 and Tappe, "The Romanians", 285.

⁶⁹ Tappe, "The Romanians", 285.

⁷⁰ Giurescu, *Istoria românilor*, 326.

elect their bishop-metropolitan and to keep the Romanian vernacular as the liturgical language.⁷¹ However, there was a strong opposition to the union among some Romanian priests and they appointed Ioan Tirca as the new Orthodox bishop. The opponents of the union got the support of Teodosie, the Wallachian metropolitan, Dositheus, the Patriarch of Jerusalem, and Constantin Brâncoveanu, the prince of Wallachia between 1688-1714.

To counteract the effect of the Orthodox attacks against the union, Leopold issued a diploma promising the same privileges for the Uniate layman as for the Catholics.⁷² The new rights for the Uniates were not implemented by the diet of Transylvania and the opposition to the union grew so rapidly that in 1702 Atanasie was summoned to Vienna to appear before a judicial commission. Under pressure he promised to break ties with Wallachia and to accept a Jesuit as his assistant.⁷³ After that promise, the primate of Hungary, Kollonics, re-ordained him as priest and re-consecrated him as bishop. A second diploma proclaimed the same rights of the three "nations" for the Uniate laymen. The diet of Transylvania protested to the emperor claiming that the Romanians would in time become too powerful, and so the status of the first class citizenship was withheld.⁷⁴ Also, a strong protest against the emancipation of the Romanian came from the Transylvanian landlords and the Serbian hierarchy who wanted to keep the Romanian of Transylvania under their jurisdiction.⁷⁵ The Orthodox metropolitan see of Alba Julia was transformed into a Uniate bishopric under the jurisdiction of the primate of Hungary, and thereafter there was no Orthodox metropolitan in Transylvania till 1864.⁷⁶

Atanasie fought, without too much success, for the promised privileges of his people and having been excommunicated⁷⁷ by the patriarchs of Constantinople and Jerusalem as well as by the metropolitan of Wallachia, he also became disillusioned with the union and died in 1713.⁷⁸ Atanasie was succeeded by Ioan Patachi (1713-1727) who after few years came into conflict with the Roman-

⁷¹ NCE, vol. 12, 720.

⁷² Tappe, "The Romanians", 285.

⁷³ See Iorga, *Istoria poporului românesc*, 543, and Tappe, "The Romanians", 285.

⁷⁴ Tappe, "The Romanians", 285.

⁷⁵ NCE, vol. 12, 720.

⁷⁶ Tappe, "The Romanians", 285-286.

⁷⁷ Giurescu, *Istoria românilor*, 327 and Tappe, "The Romanians", 286.

⁷⁸ Iorga, *Istoria poporului românesc*, 543.

Catholic bishop of Transylvania and was moved from Alba Iulia to Făgăraș. In 1721 pope Innocent XIII established the first Romanian Catholic Diocese of Făgăraș, which later was transferred to Blaj, and became independent of the Hungarian primate.⁷⁹ Patachi had no more success than Atanasie either in gaining the rights for his people or in consolidating the union.

After Patachi's death in 1727 the Uniate synod elected Inochentie Micu-Klein (1730-1751) as bishop. By that time he was a student at a Jesuit college at Tyrnau (Târnava).⁸⁰ He had to spend two more years at Muncaciu in a monastery before he took *de facto* the office of Uniate bishop at Blaj in 1730. He strove heroically to gain the rights of a "nation" for his people. Micu went to Vienna to present the fact that the promised privileges had not been given to the Romanian and asked the Queen, Maria Theresa, without much success, to secure those rights for his people. Since 1731 Micu started a monastic movement, encouraged printing and founded a primary school and a seminary for his diocese.

In 1738 Micu was given the right to use the income from the property that was given to the Uniate diocese, for the ministry of 11 monks, 20 interns and three scholarships at Rome.⁸¹ Grigore Maior, Caliani and Cotore were the first three Romanians to study in Rome and to understand besides the Catholic dogma the Latin origin of the Romanian people. This was the spark that started the fire of the Latinist movement in the Romanian history and culture. Because the promised privileges were still not granted for the Romanian lay people, Micu summoned a synod in 1744, at which he proposed that the union should be cast off if the imperial promises were not fulfilled.⁸² Inochentie Micu was summoned to Vienna to appear before a judicial commission and to answer to eighty-two charges. In 1751 he resigned from his office and slipped away to Rome, where he lived until his death in 1768.⁸³

Micu's successor was Petru Pavel Aron (1752-1764). He continued the same policy of encouraging schools, publishing and the emancipation of the Romanian population.⁸⁴ The new ideas fostered in the people a militant

⁷⁹ Ibid., 543.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 544.

⁸¹ Ibid., 548.

⁸² Tappe, "The Romanians", 286; Giurescu, *Istoria românilor*, 328.

⁸³ Iorga, *Istoria poporului românesc*, 544 and Tappe, "The Romanians", 286.

⁸⁴ NCE, vol. 12, 720.

patriotism that yearned for the day of liberation from their Hungarian masters and complete reunion with the other Romanian principalities.⁸⁵ During Aron's time the Orthodox monks and priests launched a campaign against the union. Between 1716-1762 the number of the Uniate priests dropped from 2747 to 2253, while the number of the Orthodox priests rose from 456 to 1380.⁸⁶

To counter the decline, empress Maria Theresa created the frontier militia regiments of Romanians. Those who enrolled as a militiaman were exempted from serfdom, but had to accept the union. The Uniate bishop, Grigore Maior, supported this measure and in a report send to the emperor Joseph II, claimed that between 1762 and 1782 the Orthodox had lost 746 churches and 54697 of their flock. Before this report reached Vienna, the Emperor had signed an edict of toleration, according to which any confession with at least one hundred families could build a church, a school and a hospital. Many Romanian Uniates begun to return to Orthodoxy.⁸⁷ But the backward social conditions led to much unrest especially among the Romanian serfs, who in 1784-1785 rose to revolt under the leadership of Vasile Nicula Ursu from Albac (also known as Horia).⁸⁸ After this revolt, and in spite of the repression of the rebels by the official armies, Joseph II introduced some reforms for the Romanians. Among them was the abolition of serfdom, but with his death in 1790 his reforms also disappeared.

For the Orthodox in Transylvania the persecution continued and from 1761 to 1790 the see was filled with Serbs according to the secret plans of count Kaunitz (1711-1794), the Austrian Chancellor.⁸⁹ From 1796 to 1810 the see was vacant, and only in 1811 the government allowed the election of Vasile Moga (1811-1845) as bishop. Moga was strongly supported by the Uniate bishop Ioan Bob and the governor G. Banffy.

Moga was succeeded in 1845 by Andrei Șaguna, a strong man who worked for the rights of the Romanians and the restauration of the Orthodox metropolitan see in Transylvania. His goal was achieved in 1864, when he became metropolitan and established his residence at Sibiu.⁹⁰

The Uniate Church continued to grow between 1782-1840. In 1840 there

⁸⁵ Ibid., 720.

⁸⁶ Tappe, "The Romanians", 286.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 286.

⁸⁸ Giurescu, *Istoria românilor*, 329-332; Iorga, *Istoria poporului românesc*, 546-548.

⁸⁹ Iorga, *Istoria poporului românesc*, 545.

⁹⁰ Tappe, "The Romanians", 287.

were in Transylvania: 571 400 Uniates, 686 300 Orthodox, 601 000 Protestants and 207 400 Roman-Catholics.⁹¹ The Uniates received scholarships for some young, intelligent Romanians to study in Rome and Vienna. There they were awoken to the Latin lineage of the Romanians, and when they return to Transylvania were very active in starting the "Latinist School" of Blaj. This school had a very strong influence on the development of the nationalist literature and also made way to Western humanism.⁹² Among the leaders of the new movement were: Samuel Micu (1775-1806), Gheorghe Șincai (1758-1816), Petru Maior (1755-1821) and Iosif Vulcan, the bishop of Oradea (1806-1839).⁹³

The schools started by the Uniates in Transylvania open the door for the Romanian towards Western philosophy and literature. The schools were spread allover Transylvania and the new movement cross the mountains into Wallachia and Moldavia. The Romanians experienced a cultural renaissance under the influence of Uniate schools. The School in Blaj played an important role in Revolution of 1848 in Transylvania.

⁹¹ Jedin and Dolan (eds.), *History of the Church*, vol. 7, 186.

⁹² *NCE*, vol. 12, 717.

⁹³ For the role of the "Latinist school" in Blaj see Iorga, *Istoria poporului românesc*, 548-552.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE DOCTRINE OF JUSTIFICATION IN THE THEOLOGY OF PHILIP MELANCHTHON: A BRIEF HISTORICAL SURVEY

Corneliu C. Simuț

Early Considerations

The first step in Melanchthon's discussion on justification is the definition of grace (*gratia*), which he did not see like the medieval notion of *gratia infusa*, the infusion of some qualities by means of the sacraments, but as divine favour, the goodwill of God towards us. Justification consists of the forgiveness and the remission of sins and is the outcome of the acceptance of the Gospel by faith. Melanchthon wrote in his *Loci Communes*:

We are justified when, put to death by the law, we are made alive again by the word of grace promised in Christ; the Gospel forgives our sins and we cling to Christ in faith, not doubting in the least that the righteousness of Christ is our righteousness, that the satisfaction Christ wrought is our expiation and that the resurrection of Christ is ours. In a word, we do not doubt at all that our sins have been forgiven and that God now favours us and wills us good. Nothing, therefore, of our own works, however good they may seem, constitutes our righteousness. But faith alone in the mercy and grace of God in Christ Jesus is our righteousness.¹

It is important to notice that justification does not depend on the promise of the fulfilment of the law. Using the logical dialectics of certainty and necessity, Melanchthon advances a sort of "psychological argument" and writes that, from the standpoint of our conscience, the promise of God should be first certain, then necessary. Thus, justification was promised by grace, with the purpose that it should be accepted by faith, not on account of our worth. The degree to which the law is fulfilled has nothing to do with the promise of justification, which is a strong argument for weak consciences. If the *locus* of righteousness is placed

¹ Wilhelm Pauck (ed.), *Melanchthon and Bucer* (London: SCM Press, 1969), 125.

outside the individual believer, what is actually necessary to please God is not a personal quality (*qualitas*) of the believer, but the promise and mercy of God, which are outside of us (*extra nos*).²

Thus, we have only one true righteousness, the righteousness of Christ, and this is not intrinsically ours, but extrinsically ours. The righteousness of Christ becomes ours by imputation. Faith is essential to justification, because the extrinsic righteousness of Christ becomes ours by faith. Against Catholic theology, which defines faith as being both *fides informis*, the incomplete faith of the intellectual assent, and *fides formata*, the complete faith coupled with *caritas* or good works performed in love, Melanchthon wrote that true faith was essentially *fiducia*, a real trust in the divine mercy promised by God. Thus, he used the imagery of Abraham when he analysed justification. God showed Abraham his favour not on account of personal worth, but on account of the promised mercy. For Melanchthon, faith means trust in mercy (*fiducia misericordiae*) and is the opposite of human effort. True faith should exclude our own dignity and worth (*dignitas nostra*). Abraham was indeed justified by faith, namely by trust in mercy.³ In the end, there is no point in differentiating between complete and incomplete faith, because complete faith accompanied by works does not justify as it is the mere expression of intrinsic human value. By contrast, Melanchthon has always been very concerned to stress the extrinsic character of justification. As men are not able to fulfil the demands of the law, they cannot be reckoned or pronounced (*pronuntiari*) justified on account of the fulfilment of the law, because nobody can fulfil the law. Faith, however, is able to fulfil the law in two ways: imputatively and effectively. Faith fulfils the law imputatively when we believe that the justice of Christ is imputed to us (*iustitia Christi imputatur nobis*). On the other hand, faith fulfils the law effectively when it removes doubt. Therefore, faith is the beginning (*inchoatio*) of a new obedience and love of God. In this respect, justification takes place when the believer is pronounced righteous (*pronunciator iusti*) by trust (*fiducia*) in God's mercy on account of Christ (*propter Christum*). The fact that the believer is pronounced righteous by God is of crucial importance for Melanchthon. The very obedience which necessarily follows justification is imperfect and unable to fulfil the law

² Carl Maxcey, *Bona Opera. A Study in the Development of the Doctrine of Philip Melanchthon* (Nieuwkoop: B. de Graaf, 1980), 92-93. See also Bernard Reardon, *Religious Thought in the Reformation* (London: Longman, 1981), 124.

³ Maxcey, *Bona Opera*, 92. Cf. Reardon, *Religious Thought*, 125.

because it remains within human nature. It is important to notice that justification does not only involve God pronouncing somebody to be just, but also entails the remission of sins.⁴ Any human work, which is not performed in faith, is essentially corrupt and affected by sin. Thus, it is the fundamental trust of the true faith in God the very element that justifies us:

Faith is nothing else than trust in the divine mercy promised in Christ and it makes no difference with what sign it has been promised. This trust in the good will or mercy of God first calms our hearts and then inflames us to give thanks to God for his mercy so that we keep the law gladly and willingly. Otherwise, as long as we do not believe, there is no sense of the mercy of God in our hearts. Where there is no sense of the mercy of God, there is either contempt or hatred for God. Therefore, no matter how many works of the law are done without faith, man sins.⁵

Melancthon made a very important distinction in his theology of justification; the distinction between "person" and the "work of a person." Sin always remains within the works intended to make a person pleasing to God. Thus, works do not have the effect of making anyone righteous before God. Given this situation, human conscience is always in doubt, whether or not there is at least a degree of sin within any work. It has been shown that it was fitting (*oportet*) that this doubt should be removed. Regardless of how many works anyone performs, sin still remains within them. Therefore, the sinner is pleasing to God or justified before God by grace on account of Christ (*propter Christum*), not by works.⁶

It is clear for Melancthon that works performed before justification, namely the works of the free will (*liberum arbitrium*) are sins. But it is also clear that even works performed after justification, although of the Spirit of God, are unclean, because they are performed in the flesh, which is still unclean and affected by sin. Melancthon explains that justification has begun, but is not consummated. Apparently, he infers that justification involves sanctification. This is the reason why our justification depends entirely on faith. Thus, Melancthon wrote: "Therefore, when justification is attribute to faith, it is attributed to the mercy of God; it is taken out of the realm of human efforts,

⁴ Maxcey, *Bona Opera*, 98-100.

⁵ Pauck (ed.), *Melancthon and Bucer*, 92.

⁶ Maxcey, *Bona Opera*, 93-94.

works and merits. The beginning and growth of righteousness are bound to the mercy of God so that the righteousness of the entire life is nothing else than faith."⁷

The Theology of Maturity

The next stage in the development of Melanchthon's theology of justification is the *Augsburg Confession*, Article IV, in which Melanchthon reasserts the main aspects of the Lutheran doctrine of justification. Originally published in 1530 and later, in 1540 with a significant alteration of the Article X concerning the Lord's Supper, the *Augsburg Confession* discloses the classical Lutheran view of justification. The importance of justification particularly and of salvation generally is obvious, as the confession clearly begins with the affirmation of the Nicene doctrine of God in the Article I and then immediately discusses the problem of the original sin in the Article II. Soteriological overtones could be easily identified in Melanchthon's doctrine of original sin, as he declares that after the fall of Adam into sin, all men begotten by the natural process of procreation are born in sin (*nascantur cum peccato*), which means they have no fear of God and no confidence in God by birth (*fiducia erga Deum*). The only essential desire men have by birth is a "fleshly appetite" or concupiscence, which is a "disease" in Melanchthon's opinion. Moreover, this original fault is "truly sin, condemning and bringing eternal death now also upon all that are not born again by baptism and the Holy Spirit."⁸ Article III, "Of the Son of God", is relevant to justification, because it asserts that the purpose of the death of Christ was the reconciliation between God and men. The atonement of Christ is a sacrifice "not only for original guilt (*non tantum pro culpa originis*), but also for all actual sins of men (*sed etiam pro omnibus actualibus hominum peccatis*)."⁹

Thus, justification consists in the forgiveness of sins and the receiving of righteousness before God. Human merits play no role in justification, which is given to us freely, of grace, for the sake of Christ. Justification must be appropriated by faith in Christ, who obtained salvation for humanity. Faith is imputed by God to the believer and is counted for righteousness in his sight:

Men cannot be justified, obtain forgiveness of sins and righteousness before

⁷ Pauck (ed.), *Melanchthon and Bucer*, 105-106.

⁸ Philip Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom*, vol. III (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1996), 8.

⁹ Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom*, vol. III, 129-132.

God (*coram Deo*) by their own powers, merits or works, but are justified freely, of grace, for Christ's sake through faith (*gratis iustificentur propter Christum per fidem*), when they believe that they are received into favour and their sins forgiven for Christ's sake (*peccata remitti propter Christum*), who by his death has satisfied for our sins. This faith does God impute for righteousness before him (*hanc fidem imputat Deus pro iustitia coram ipso*).¹⁰

The Apology of the Augsburg Confession, which Melancthon wrote a year later, contains some relevant elements of justification doctrine, like for instance, the fact that justifying faith is closely related to the *beneficia Christi*. Melancthon insisted that faith in Christ alone justified the sinner in the sight of God. Melancthon discussed the nature of justification, which is essentially forensic, in relation to the accusing law. Again, Melancthon suggested a sort of a "psychological approach" to justification, because our conscience ought to stand on the fact that we are pronounced righteous freely, on account of Christ (*nos gratis propter Christum pronuntiari iustos*). The main emphasis is on the righteousness of faith, as if we had fulfilled the law. Thus, the sinner who trusts in Christ is already righteous and has what the law requires, because the law does not accuse such a person. Melancthon's doctrine of forensic justification does not totally exclude the law as a result of justification. Because of God's proclamation of righteousness, the law is not in the position to accuse any longer. There is a remnant of sin within us, therefore the law cannot be fulfilled, but it cannot disappear either. Faith and works are both necessary, but faith ultimately prevails and offers our conscience the only escape route from the accusation of the law. Actually, forensic justification increases the significance of the law. Therefore, the conscience, which was made good by God's gracious declaration, must by necessity use the law to please God.¹¹ According to *The Apology of the Augsburg Confession*, to justify means to make (*effici*) unrighteous men righteous or to regenerate them, in the sense of imputing them a righteousness that is not intrinsic to them (*iustitia aliena*).

This idea is not singular in Melancthon's thought. Thus, in his *Commentary of Romans*, Melancthon defined justification by constantly linking imputation to acceptance. The righteousness of a person consists in the imputation of righteousness and the acceptance of the justice of God, which is

¹⁰ Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom*, vol. III, 10.

¹¹ Cf. Timothy Wengert, *Law and Gospel. Philip Melancthon's Debate with John Agricola of Eisleben over Poenitentia* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1997), 183-185, 196.

realized for the sake of our mediator by means of faith alone (*iustitia personae est imputatio iustitiae seu acceptatio in iudicio Dei quae fit propter mediatorem sola fide*). To be justified means to consider or to pronounce just in a forensic way, namely in the court of God or within the Holy Trinity (*iustificari significat forensi more iustum reputari seu pronuntiar*). According to Melanchthon, to be justified in the theology of Paul means to be accepted by God or to be pleasing to God (*iustus in his Pauli disputationibus significat idem quod acceptus seu placens Deo*).¹² Again, he is very careful to write that faith is not an intellectual assent, but essentially a complete trust, a firm confidence in God's mercy and in the forgiveness and remission of sins in Christ.¹³ Justification is remission of sins and acceptance in the sight of God, a status which is always in connection to the gift of the Holy Spirit (*iustificatio est remissio peccatorum et acceptatio coram Deo, cum qua coniuncta est donatio spiritus sancti*). For Melanchthon, it is actually the free grace of God the element which lays the basis for the remission of sins and the acceptance for the sake of Christ, which are both in close relationship to the gift of the Holy Spirit (*est enim gratia gratuita remissio peccatorum et acceptatio propter Christum, cum qua coniuncta est donatio spiritus sancti*). Thus, justification is a sort of disposition that the divine will has assumed on our behalf. Within this context, the work of Christ is very important. The demands of divine justice are reconciled only by the imputation of the obedience or the merit of Christ to us. It is important, however, to notice that this work of God does not materially touch us in any substantive way. The decree of justification is substantively separated from the quality or newness worked by divine grace within human nature. Justification is accordingly the free acceptance of God to consider and reckon what is righteous as righteous or what we did not do just as if we had done it just.¹⁴

After 1531, the theology of Melanchthon changed and he began to promote the idea that justification is purely a matter of an imputed righteousness and of a declaration of acceptance. By 1532, in his *Commentary on Romans*, Melanchthon had already defined the essence of human salvation by means of forensic justification only. Melanchthon wrote: " 'To be justified' properly signifies to be reputed righteous, that is, to be reputed accepted. Thus it should be understood relatively, just as in a law court, according to the Hebrew custom, 'to be justified'

¹² Stephen Strehle, *The Catholic Roots of the Protestant Gospel* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1995), 68ff.

¹³ Reardon, *Religious Thought*, 133.

¹⁴ Strehle, *The Catholic Roots*, 72ff.

is used for 'to be pronounced righteous', as when someone says, 'The Roman people have justified (that is, pronounced righteous, absolved, approved) Scipio, who was accused by the people's tribunes.' Although it is necessary that new motions exist in those who have been reconciled, nevertheless 'to be justified' does not in a strict sense (*proprie*) signify to have new virtues. But it should be understood relatively (*relative*) concerning the will of God: to be approved or accepted by God.¹⁵ Thus, justification is firstly a matter of divine pronouncement in God's court of law concerning the status of man as righteous and secondly a matter of divine acceptance of the sinner considered righteous. It is interesting to notice that Melancthon narrowed considerably the definition of justification and eliminated any internal change or transformation within the person. Virtue, with special reference to sanctification, is totally excluded from justification. In the *Scholia in Epistulam Pauli ad Colossenses* of 1534, Melancthon focused on justification by faith, which must be understood relatively (*relative*) and makes reference to the fact that we are pronounced righteous by faith in the mercy promised on account of Christ (*propter Christum*). Thus, justification should be understood relatively as consisting of both the remission of sins and the reception or the imputation of righteousness.¹⁶ In this context, sanctification becomes clearly distinct from justification and is ultimately concerned with regeneration (*regeneratio*). Sanctification follows justification and is characterized by obedience. Firstly, what it counts before God is that the believer should be freed from doubt, then his obedience is pleasing to God. In this context, Melancthon's distinction between "person" and "work" is of particular importance, because it establishes the unworthiness of both the person and the person's work before God. This means that nothing intrinsic to the person is the basis for justification, but a principle outside the person, the principle of the righteousness of Christ.

The next important question is whether works are important at all for salvation. If they are done out of a proper fear and trust in God and not out of the desires of the sinful human nature, works can be pleasing to God. For Melancthon, this means that faith pertains to the person and the law pertains to the work. A work is pleasing to God when seen as the fulfilment of the

¹⁵ Melancthon, *Melancthon's Werke in Auswahl*, Robert Stupperich (ed.), 5:39.7-16, cited in Wengert, *Law and Gospel*, 179.

¹⁶ Wengert, *Law and Gospel*, 179-182.

command of God, whereas the person has a right standing before God on account of Christ (*propter Christum*). The real situation is that a work is not pleasing to God because it satisfies the law, but because it is offered to God through Christ. It is of uttermost importance that in a person who has been justified by faith, obedience to the law should necessarily follow (*necessario sequi debet*). For Melanchthon, the Gospel itself requires penance and consequently obedience to the law. Through justification, the sinner is given a new life, which produces new works. Although works must be performed in obedience to God, Melanchthon is very careful to stress the ineffectiveness of works, because of the sin that is always present in every human being. Again, the really important thing is faith (*fides*), which signifies trust (*fiducia*) in God's mercy. Accordingly, faith makes us pleasing to God on account of Christ, although our works are unworthy (*indigna*).

Melanchthon's conclusion is that works, no matter how abundant, are utterly unworthy to fulfill the demands of the law. Therefore, they do not provide justification. Thus, Melanchthon repudiates justification by law, not because of the law, but because of unworthy works. In Melanchthon's opinion, Paul did not preach justification of the law, because nobody satisfied the law, not because the law was evil. Moral law does not free us from God's judgment and eternal death, but it rather accuses us.¹⁷ In spite of these sharp distinctions, Melanchthon continued to write about justification and sanctification without separating them. In the 1555 edition of his *Loci Communes*, Melanchthon wrote that if we believe in the Son of God, we have forgiveness of sins and Christ's righteousness is imputed to us, so that we are justified and pleasing to God for the sake of Christ. For Melanchthon, we are reborn through the Lord Jesus Christ, who speaks comfort to our hearts and imparts to us his Holy Spirit. Accordingly, we truly are heirs of eternal salvation. The close connection between the imputation of Christ's righteousness in justification and the new and eternal life of sanctification is maintained in his later theology. Melanchthon was convinced that justification always brings new life and obedience with it. Likewise, the beginning of renewal occurs at the same time with justification.¹⁸

¹⁷ Maxcey, *Bona Opera*, 92. Cf. Reardon, *Religious Thought*, 94-98.

¹⁸ See Reardon, *Religious Thought*, 133.

Later tendencies

In his later theology, Melancthon became increasingly preoccupied with the importance of the free will in justification, which shaped his theology towards synergism. Melancthon began to promote the idea that regardless whether justification is separated from sanctification or not, human will is not entirely passive. As early as the 1532 edition of his *Commentary on Romans* and the 1535 edition of his *Loci Communes*, Melancthon began to show an obvious interest in the effectiveness of man's rational volition. Thus, divine election is determined by something in us (*aliqua causa electionis in nobis*), whereby he means that man has at least the capacity to either receive or reject grace (*facultas applicandi se ad gratiam*). In this respect, God draws him who is willing. In his treatise *De Anima*, written in 1553, Melancthon openly taught that human will is not inactive in the moral struggle between sin and righteousness, which leads to the conclusion that human will has also an important part to play in justification. For Melancthon, the will is the power to seek the highest things (*suprema*) and to act freely when, by means of the intellect, the object has been shown to it. Due to the increasingly significant role of the will in justification, which shaped Melancthon's later theology, it could be said that, in Luther's theology, the phrase *iustificatio sola fide* is essential, while in Melancthon's theology, the phrase *iustificatio fide* is what really matters.¹⁹

¹⁹ Reardon, *Religious Thought*, 134. Further bibliography on justification in the theology of Melancthon: Lowell Green, *How Melancthon Helped Luther Discover the Gospel* (Fallbrook: Verdict Publications, 1980), 206-236; Alister McGrath, *Iustitia Dei. A History of the Christian Doctrine of Justification from 1500 to the Present Day* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 23-26; Peter Fraenkel, *Testimonia Patrum. The Function of the Patristic Argument in the Theology of Philip Melancthon* (Geneve: Librairie Droz, 1961), 92-98; Ralph W. Quere, *Melancthon's Christum Cognoscere. Christ's Efficacious Presence in the Eucharistic Theology of Melancthon* (Nieuwkoop: B. de Graaf, 1977), 110-117ff; Timothy Wengert, *Human Freedom, Christian Righteousness. Philip Melancthon's Exegetical Debate with Erasmus of Rotterdam* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 80-109; Franz Hildebrandt, *Melancthon: Alien or Ally?* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1946), 44-54; Robert Stupperich, *Melancthon* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1965), 82-85; Lyle Bierma, "What Hath Wittenberg to Do with Heidelberg? Philip Melancthon and the Heidelberg Catechism", in Karin Maag (ed.), *Melancthon in Europe. His Work and Influence beyond Wittenberg* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1999), 103-121; Timothy Wengert (ed.), *Philip Melancthon (1497-1560) and the Commentary* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997); Sachiko Kusukawa, *The Transformation of Natural Philosophy. The case of Philip Melancthon* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

LES METAPHORES OCULAIRES DANS LA MYSTIQUE DE MAÎTRE ECKHART

Daniel Fărcaș

La mystique rhénane du XIV^{ème} siècle ouvre un univers théologique tout spécial. Surgie de la tradition dominicaine, mais comme critique de la philosophie de St. Thomas d'Aquin (et donc implicitement de la scolastique), la mystique rhénane constitue le tournant qui lie la tradition médiévale (à laquelle elle appartient) à l'esprit moderne. En vérité, c'est la mystique rhénane qui entame le vocabulaire de la philosophie allemande (lequel se retrouve dès l'idéalisme jusqu'à l'existentialisme heideggérien) et qui pose un nouvel horizon théologique – un qui prépare la Réforme – en soulevant la problématique reprise plus tard par le protestantisme. Notamment, elle oppose une théologie de la grâce (du *Gelassenheit*) à la théologie naturelle thomiste ; elle paraît essayer à remplacer l'ontologie scalaire par une ontologie de la différence qualitative.

La personnalité de Maître Eckhart se trouve, sans doute, au centre de ce mouvement de spiritualité. La mystique qu'il professe engage un imaginaire spécifique. L'union de l'âme humaine avec Dieu est cernée non pas par des concepts, comme le faisait la théologie naturelle scolastique, mais par des suggestions sensibles. La connaissance négative relève de l'expérience, du senti plutôt que de l'ordre conceptuel. En effet, chez le Thuringien, l'intuition intellectuelle remplace les concepts intellectuels. Les métaphores qui décrivent l'expérience mystique sont empruntées à l'ordre visible (au visuel). Eckhart parle de la lumière, des ténèbres et... de l'œil. Maître Eckhart construit une véritable mystique *oculaire*.

Cependant, l'expérience mystique eckhartienne se caractérise par la synesthésie : l'œil devient l'organe de la tactilité par la suppression de l'espace diaphane qui sépare l'œil de l'objet (l'œil de Dieu touche l'œil de l'homme dans l'union mystique ; l'œil du Créateur soutient incessamment sa création).

1. L'œil creux

La pensée de Maître Eckhart est une véritable philosophie de la lumière. Comme

Albert le Grand, il se trouve dans la tradition des livres de Pseudo-Denys. Ce dernier a déployé, dans la descendance platonicienne, la dialectique de la lumière/ des ténèbres de Dieu. Maître Eckhart oppose la vision à la tactilité pour arriver (comme on verra plus tard) à munir l'œil de la capacité de toucher. La vision est plus noble que la tactilité : "La lumière divine est trop noble pour avoir une communauté avec les puissances, car à tout ce qui touche et est touché, Dieu est lointain et étranger. Et c'est parce que les puissances sont touchées et touchent qu'elles perdent leur virginité. La lumière divine ne peut briller en elles, cependant par l'exercice et le détachement, elles peuvent devenir réceptives. (...) une lumière est donnée aux puissances (...). Or, par cette lumière, une impression parvient aux puissances qui opèrent dans l'âme"¹. Par cette lumière, la tactilité est amenée dans le champ de la visibilité. La vue se substitue à la tactilité, l'œil à la main.

Au niveau de la théorie de la connaissance, le Thuringien garde l'idée d'une opposition objectuelle entre celui qui voit et ce qui est vu : "Sic visus non respicit ipsum visibile, rem scilicet visam, nisi per accidens. Propter quod substantia rei visae nihil facit ad ipsam visionem, sicut visibile commune (...)"². La relation entre ce qui est vu et celui qui voit est la relation entre la substance et l'accident. La couleur est *per substantiam* dans l'objet vu et n'est que par participation dans l'œil. Il le dit clairement dans le *Sermon XII [Qui audit me non confundetur]* : "Quand je vois une couleur bleue ou blanche, la vision de mon œil qui voit la couleur, autrement dit cela même qui voit, est identique à ce qui est vu par l'œil"³.

Il s'agit d'une réduction (phénoménologique) du niveau visible, qui a comme but le niveau invisible qui rend possible la phénoménalisation en tant qu'image. La possibilité non-vue du visible est acquise par la mise entre parenthèses du niveau factice de la connaissance ordinaire. La réalité, c'est-à-dire l'image mondaine, est ainsi repensée, c'est-à-dire re-thématisée à partir et en relation nécessaire avec sa possibilité transcendante.

Pour le mystique de Thuringe, l'époque phénoménologique consiste dans un changement de perspective. Eckhart nous enseigne qu'il faut voir l'univers d'un nouveau point de vue. En commentant la parole de Saint Paul qui disait qu'il

¹ Maître Eckhart, *Sermon X [In diebus suis placuit deo et inventus est iustus]*.

² Eckhart, *Expositio libri Exodi*, LW II, 55, p. 60.

³ Eckhart, *Sermon XII [Qui audit me non confundetur]*, in *Traité et sermons*, trad. Alain de Libera, GF – Flammarion, 1993, p. 299.

aurait préféré être éternellement séparé de Dieu pour ses frères et pour Dieu, Maître Eckhart dit que l'Apôtre des Gentils le faisait en pleine perfection. Autrement dit, il avait dépassé la vision humaine du monde et il est arrivé dans la situation où il voulait. D'ailleurs, il ne faut pas prier pour les biens de ce monde, car la vraie prière vise toujours des biens spirituels. Il faut donc abandonner le monde, effacer son image, tourner ses yeux vers Dieu pour retrouver le vrai monde créé. Regarder le monde à travers Dieu, voilà ce que Maître Eckhart nous propose ! C'est ici qu'intervient la mise en jeu d'une des thèses condamnées au Procès de Cologne : "Il y a dans l'âme quelque chose qui est tellement apparenté à Dieu que c'est un et non uni". Mais "cela n'a rien de commun avec rien et cela n'a non plus rien de commun avec tout ce qui est créé. Tout ce qui est créé est néant. Or cela est loin de tout ce qui est créé et lui est étranger. Si l'homme était tout entier ainsi, il serait entièrement incréé et incréable"⁴. L'anéantissement est le mot eckhartien pour "réduction phénoménologique".

La réduction du néant des choses créées nous conduit à l'autre néant : celui de Dieu et de son œil. La réduction nous fournit la possibilité de l'intuition eidétique. Cette intuition est exprimée par la coïncidence de l'œil de l'homme et de l'œil de Dieu. Au-delà de la multiplicité des choses sensibles, l'intuition eidétique se réalise en tant qu'unité entre Dieu et ce qu'il y a de commun avec Dieu dans l'âme. L'eide est l'œil qui nous permet de re-voir les choses, cette fois-ci d'une nouvelle vision. "L'œil dans lequel je vois Dieu est le même œil dans lequel Dieu me voit. Mon œil et l'œil de Dieu sont un seul et même œil, une seule et même connaissance, un seul et même amour"⁵. Cet œil qui voit les couleurs est dépouillé de toute couleur. Même si la pensée eckhartienne est, en quelque sorte, apparentée à celle de Platon, on retrouve chez lui une différence ontologique entre le vu et la possibilité de la vision. L'eide (l'œil) n'a pas de couleur et n'est pas une image ou quelque chose de visible. Elle n'est que la possibilité de l'image (du visible). L'eide est dépouillée de tout ce qui est sensible.

Par conséquent, l'eide est un néant – elle est un œil creux.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 297.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 299.

2. L'œil qui touche – l'ontologie de la proximité

Ce que nous avons déjà nommé réduction phénoménologique est fort bien souligné dans le commentaire du livre de l'Exode. C'est une réduction du niveau sensible. On met entre parenthèses tout ce qui vient *a sensibus*, parce que les eides sont des *perfectiones*. Le caractère non-discoursif des eides est évident ici, car les perfections se trouvent au-delà de toute nomination habituelle. Le dépassement du sensible se fait vers Celui qui est au-delà de tout nom : "(...) sciendum quod omnis cognitio nostra habet a sensibus, ita ut carens a nativitate sensu aliquo careat scientia illius sensibilis, et quia secundum quod res cognoscimus, secundum hoc et ex illis ipsas nominamus. Perfectionem autem omnes et omnium generum cum sint in deo, utpote in causa prima omnium, et in ipso necessario sunt unum simpliciter et res una, quia « deus unus ». (...) Hinc est quod qui ipsum deum *videret* [c'est nous qui soulignons – D. F.] per se essentiam dei scilicet, non ex aliis *nec per alia media* [c'est nous qui soulignons – D. F.], *videret* unicam perfectionem et *per ipsa videret omnes perfectiones* [c'est nous qui soulignons – D. F.], non ipsam per illas. Haec tamen perfectio non esset haec vel illa, sed quid unum super omnes. (...) Secundum illud Zachariae ultimo : « in illa die erit dominus unus et nomen eius unum ». Hoc tamen unum non esset nomen sapientiae nec potentiae, et sic de singulis, sed esset unum omnia super omnes, in quo omnia, secundum illud Phil. 2 : « donavit illi nomen quod est super omne nomen ». « Nomen », inquit, in singulari, quia est unum, « quod est super omne nomen », quia omnium nominum perfectiones, divisae in creaturis, in ipso est res una, perfectio una⁶. La coïncidence de l'œil de l'homme avec l'œil de Dieu amène le premier à la connaissance de l'essence parfaite. Cette connaissance est une vision (*videret*) de Dieu. Elle est une vision qui ne passe pas à travers le sensible. Par conséquent, elle est non-médiée, mais immédiate. Il n'y a plus de distance entre l'œil et le vu. L'œil de l'âme, comme l'œil de Dieu, a une fonction tactile. L'œil de l'âme ne connaît pas l'eide *per alia media*. Si, pour Aristote, la tactilité a le rôle de thématiser le *sensus communis*, l'œil de l'âme est, chez Eckhart, un organe qui touche. L'œil de l'homme (de l'âme) et l'œil de Dieu coïncident parce que l'un touche l'autre, en touchant en même temps les perfections qu'ils connaissent. L'œil qui touche est la pierre angulaire d'une philosophie de l'immédiat, d'une ontologie de la proximité.

C'est l'œil divin qui touche qui ne laisse pas la créature sombrer dans le

⁶ Eckhart, *Expositio libri Exodi*, LW II, 57, p. 62-63.

néant. Il la supporte par dessous, il la tient. L'œil creux, vidé de toute couleur, tient les choses comme dans le creux de la main. Dieu n'est pas seulement force créatrice, mais il est aussi pouvoir providentiel. Il soutient la réalité créée. Car "Deus autem esse est et solus dat esse immediate omnibus. Unde Gregorius ait quod omnia in nihilum redigerentur, si non ea manu teneret omnipotentia creatoris. Exemplum ponit Augustinus de luce in medio ad solis praesentiam. Hoc est ergo quod hic dicitur: *omnipotens nomen eius* (...) "⁷. On retrouve l'expressivité particulière du non-discoursif (*omnipotens nomen eius*), qui est symbolisée ici à nouveau à la fois par la main (*ea manu teneret omnipotentia creatoris*) et par la lumière (*lux in medio ad solis praesentiam*). C'est le même rapprochement entre le touché et le vu ou plutôt entre la tactilité et la vision. La présence de Dieu qui conserve sa créature n'est pas seulement puissante, mais encore plus : lumineuse. C'est l'œil creux de Dieu, ce néant visuel qui répand la lumière de l'être sur toute sa création. Le *Sermon IV [Omne datum optimum]* réintroduit le concept déjà métaphysique d'œil, dans la construction qui a fait époque jusque dans la phénoménologie heideggerienne, notamment l'expression "clin d'œil". Comme dans l'*Expositio in Exodum*, le clin d'œil se réfère à la providence divine. Ce sermon a suscité la 43^e proposition condamnée (de la 2^e liste) pendant le Procès de Cologne : "Nulla creaturam habet esse, quia esse creaturarum dependet ex presentia dei. Si deus ad ictum oculi se avertet, tunc creature redigerentur in nichilum. Ego dico aliquando et est verum : qui acciperet totum mundum una cum deo, ille non haberet plus quam se ipse solum deum haberet"⁸. Dans la version en *mittelhochdeutsch* du *Sermon IV*, donnée par Théry, le texte éckhartien dit : "Abkerte sich gott eynen ougenblick, sy wurden zuo nicht"⁹. L'œil creux de Dieu, ce néant qui abonde d'être, ces ténèbres qui émanent de la lumière, soutient par son être et par sa lumière tout ce qu'il a créé, Dieu a créé le monde par un clin d'œil qui a fait surgir de ses yeux la lumière de l'être. C'est aussi par un clin d'œil que la créature disparaît. Si Dieu détournait (*abkheren*) sa face, ses yeux de sa création, c'est-à-dire s'il fermait ses yeux, la création tournerait dans les ténèbres d'avant la création. L'*ictus oculi/ougenblick* créateur a rempli par ses effluves lumineuses les ténèbres en créant ainsi le monde. C'est la bienveillance de ses yeux, son regard perpétuel, qui

⁷ *Ibid.*, 29, p. 34.

⁸ *Manuscrit 33^b de la Bibliothèque de Soest (II)*, éd. Gabriel Théry, in *AHDLMA*, 1926-1927, Proposition 43, p. 248.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 248.

garde la créature. L'*ictus* est le coup qui donne l'être à la créature, parce qu'il est l'œil qui la touche.

Concernant la dialectique visible-tactile, le *Sermon X [In diebus suis placuit deo et inventus est iustus]* rapproche à nouveau la spatialité et la temporalité qu'il faut réduire afin d'accéder à l'immédiateté et à l'instant. Les métaphores du Thuringien sont d'une rare beauté, la subtilité et le raffinement de l'expression servant admirablement à la teneur spirituelle qu'elle doit exprimer. L'âme a deux yeux : un œil ontologique non-topologique qui supprime toute distance et donc tout milieu diaphane (il est un œil tactile) ; un œil extérieur, qui lui sert à la connaissance des choses sensibles et qui perçoit selon le mode de l'image. "L'âme a deux yeux, l'un intérieur, l'autre extérieur. L'œil intérieur de l'âme est celui qui regarde dans l'être et reçoit son être de Dieu sans aucun intermédiaire : c'est son opération propre. L'œil extérieur de l'âme est celui qui est tourné vers toutes les créatures et les perçoit selon le mode d'images et le mode d'une puissance"¹⁰. La réduction phénoménologique de l'œil extérieur se fait en tant que réduction de l'image, c'est-à-dire, pour employer la terminologie kantienne, de l'aperception. L'image est rapprochée ici de la puissance (de l'âme) qui n'est jamais parfaitement actualisée. Les puissances de l'âme ne peuvent pas rendre actuelle la chose perçue, mais les puissances ne peuvent que la recevoir en tant qu'image. Par contre, l'œil intérieur est le regard tactile sur l'être, c'est le regard de l'âme vers l'être de Dieu et le regard de Dieu sur l'âme. Ce regard mutuel de l'âme et de Dieu fait que mon œil et l'œil de Dieu coïncident, parce qu'il n'y a pas de distance entre ces yeux qui se regardent réciproquement. L'œil intérieur divin confère de l'être, parce que le regard de Dieu ne relève pas de la puissance de l'âme. Il est un regard créateur qui ne voit pas la chose comme puissance, mais en acte. En résumant, la réduction phénoménologique de l'œil extérieur pour arriver à la vision pure et tactile (ou même touchante) par l'œil intérieur est la réduction de l'image phénoménale, la seule qui rend possible la connaissance nouménale. Voir par l'œil de Dieu est voir la création dans son essence. Pour Kant, dont nous venons d'employer la terminologie, il n'y a pas de connaissance du noumène, parce qu'il n'y a pas chez lui d'intuition intellectuelle. Il vaudra peut-être mieux rester au langage de la phénoménologie, qui récupère par son intuition eidétique l'intuition intellectuelle critiquée par le philosophe de

¹⁰ Eckhart, *Sermon X [In diebus suis placuit deo et inventus est iustus]*, in *Sermons*, Paris, Seuil, trad. Jeanne Ancelet-Hustache, vol. 1 (1974).

Königsberg. A la réduction de la spatialité, qui fait coïncider l'œil de l'âme et l'œil de Dieu, dans l'immédiateté eidétique, Maître Eckhart ajoute la réduction de la temporalité, qui fait coïncider le jour de l'âme et le jour de Dieu dans l'instant eidétique ("instant essentiel") : "Les jours qui se sont écoulés depuis six ou sept jours et les jours qui furent il y a six mille ans sont aussi proches d'aujourd'hui que le jour qui fut hier. Pourquoi ? Parce que le temps est là dans un actuel présent. Du fait que le ciel poursuit sa course, la première révolution du ciel produit le jour. Là se produit en un instant le jour de l'âme, et dans sa lumière naturelle où sont toutes choses, c'est un jour entier : jour et nuit ne sont qu'un. Le jour de Dieu est celui où l'âme se trouve dans le jour de l'éternité, en un instant essentiel, et là le Père engendre son Fils unique en un instant actuel, et l'âme renaît en Dieu. (...) Quel que soit le nombre des fils que l'âme enfante dans l'éternité, il n'y a cependant pas plus d'un Fils, car cela se passe au-delà du temps, dans le jour de l'éternité"¹¹. Le jour de Dieu n'est pas un jour comme tous les jours, mais le jour au-delà de la succession temporelle comme de la diversité des choses. C'est l'instant qui réunit toutes les choses dans leur essence, c'est l'instant essentiel. La vision de l'essence se fait dans un clin d'œil (*ougenblick*). Le jour de l'âme est donc un instant. D'une manière aristotélicienne, le temps est compris en tant que mouvement du ciel. La sphère céleste enveloppe la succession du jour et de la nuit, l'avant et l'après. En tant que possibilité de la succession, le ciel n'est pas temporel. De la même manière, l'âme se soustrait à la succession temporelle, à l'écoulement de l'antéro-postérieur, parce qu'elle est dans le clin d'œil, regardant le monde temporel de l'éternité eidétique. L'âme devient ainsi, pas moins que le ciel, une limite de la temporalité, tout comme le ciel. Pour Aristote du *De caelo*, le ciel est l'enveloppe du temps et ainsi, pourrait-on dire, sa condition de possibilité¹². Le Stagirite ajoute que c'est à Dieu qu'appartient le mouvement éternel céleste¹³. Tributaire à la tradition aristotélicienne, Maître Eckhart constate que c'est là, dans le ciel, que se produit en un clin d'œil le jour de l'âme. Dans le *Sermon VIII [In occisione gladii mortui sunt]*, le ciel est aussi le symbole de l'éternité, de la touche intouchable. L'âme, à son tour, est comprise aussi comme un ciel. "Rien ne peut toucher le ciel, c'est-à-dire : est un être céleste l'être humain pour qui toutes choses n'ont pas assez

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 109-110.

¹² *De caelo*, I, 9, 278 b-279 a.

¹³ *Ibid.*, II, 3, 285 b.

d'importance pour qu'elles puissent le toucher. (...) L'âme, dans ce qu'elle a de plus indigent, a pourtant plus que le ciel et toutes les créatures"¹⁴. L'âme est un être céleste s'il refuse de toucher les choses par ses puissances et qu'il veuille les toucher d'une manière essentielle. L'âme est une espèce de ciel qui enveloppe la création en la tenant (touchant) par son regard dans un *ougenblick*. Eckhart dit ailleurs que la "finis temporis non est tempus (...). Hinc est quod caritas, cum sit « finis praeceptis », ut dictum est 1 Tim. 1, non debet inter praecepta numerari"¹⁵. Ce saut de niveau, entre l'ontologie et l'éthique est évident dans le sermon en cause. Comme la fin du temps est toute différente du temps, la fin de la loi (du précepte) n'est plus la loi, mais sa limite qui la rend possible et, en la rendant possible, l'abolit. L'analogie entre l'éternité et l'amour (*caritas*) est extrêmement suggestive. Comme l'éternité est le commencement et le terme du temps, l'amour est le principe et l'accomplissement de la loi. L'amour relève de l'éternité. Dans le *Prologus generalis in Opus tripartitum*, Eckhart exprime l'idée que Dieu crée *in principio* et, par conséquent, "finis et initium idem, necessario simul fit et factum est, simul incipit et perfectum est. Deus autem, utpote esse, et initium est et « principium et finis »"¹⁶. La simultanéité du principe et de la fin place tout le développement dans l'enveloppe de Dieu de son éternité. La succession temporelle commence et s'achève dans un clin d'œil. Toute la création se trouve dans le clin d'œil amoureux de Dieu. Comme dans le Commentaire de l'Exode, dans le *Sermon X*, l'amour relève de l'*ougenblick* : "Un maître dit que l'âme est directement touchée par l'Esprit saint, car dans cet amour il m'aime, et l'âme aime Dieu dans ce même amour dans lequel il s'aime lui-même"¹⁷. Ce toucher de l'Esprit est la même chose que le regard de l'œil intérieur de l'âme vers Dieu. Le toucher et la vue coïncident à nouveau.

Avant de quitter le problème ontologique de la *caritas*, qui apparaît à la fois dans le *Sermon X* et le Commentaire de l'Exode il faut remarquer les conséquences herméneutiques de la charité. La nouvelle alliance, celle de l'amour et de la grâce est la fin éternelle de l'ancienne. Cette dernière est

¹⁴ Maître Eckhart, *Sermon VIII [In occisione gladii mortui sunt]*, in *Sermons*, Paris, Seuil, trad. Jeanne Ancelet-Hustache, vol. 1 (1974), p. 93.

¹⁵ Eckhart, *Expositio libri Exodi*, LW II, 96, p. 98.

¹⁶ Eckhart, *Prologus generalis in Opus tripartitum*, §19, in *L'oeuvre latine*, Paris, Cerf, vol. 1, 1984, trad. Fernand Brunner ; Alain de Libera ; Edouard Wéber ; Emilie zum Brunn, p. 66.

¹⁷ Eckhart, *Sermon X [In diebus suis placuit deo et inventus est iustus]*, in *Sermons*, Paris, Seuil, trad. Jeanne Ancelet-Hustache, vol. 1 (1974), p. 110.

engloutie par la première, qui est son principe et son accomplissement. La succession temporelle est en vue de son accomplissement en tant que πλήρωμα τοῦ χρόνου¹⁸. L'amour de la plénitude du temps est l'accomplissement de la loi. Et aussi le principe et la limite de son interprétation. On opère la réduction phénoménologique du niveau factice de la loi pour la déchiffrer par l'œil eidétique de l'amour. L'amour est un invariant eidétique.

¹⁸ "Quand le temps est-il accompli ? Quand il n'y a plus de temps. Pour celui qui, dans le temps, a mis son coeur dans l'éternité, en lui toutes les choses temporelles sont mortes, c'est la plénitude du temps" – *Sermon XI [Impletum est templum Elizabet]*, p. 115.

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