

Peter Martyr Vermigli's Political Theology and the Elizabethan Church

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SHOULD HISTORIANS OF THE ENGLISH REFORMATION take more than a passing interest in the writings of a Florentine aristocrat who spent merely five years of his career in England and who never mastered the English tongue? It is arguable that Peter Martyr Vermigli, sometime scholar at Padua, Abbot of Spoleto, Prior of the Augustinian Canons at Lucca, and Professor of Hebrew in the *Schola Tigurina* merits being numbered among the chief architects of the reformation of the Church of England as it came to be formed in the reign of Edward VI and reached a more settled self-understanding in statutes of the Elizabethan religious settlement of 1559. In order to make such a claim, a reappraisal of certain primary assumptions governing the interpretation of the English Reformation is required. Chief among them is the long and widely held assumption of the 'exceptional' or 'peculiar' character of England's experience of the Reformation which, for a very long time, has constituted an axiom of English Reformation historiography. Yet this assumption obscures the well-deserved title of the great Italian reformer to a pivotal role in the formation of the protestant religious settlement under Edward VI and its consolidation under Elizabeth.

Tied to the hermeneutic of 'English exceptionalism' is the corollary notion of the so-called *via media* of Anglicanism whereby the Reformation in England is understood to be a sort of halfway house between Roman Catholicism and Reformed Protestantism. It is a long-standing commonplace to view the Church of England in the sixteenth century as the 'crucible for an emerging Anglicanism'.¹ One scholar recently referred to 'recognition among some contemporaries that the English church

¹ See *FLE*, 6/1: 2.

represented a kind of Protestant *tertium quid* among established European churches, whose character suggested the possibility of rapprochement with Roman Catholic as well as fellow Protestant churches.² As pre-eminent defender of the Elizabethan Settlement, Richard Hooker, for example, is classically held up as a key proponent of this theological and institutional middle way; and thus his theology is represented as bearing the mark of a distinctively 'Anglican' approach with respect to both content and method. Other pre-eminent Edwardian and Elizabethan divines—Thomas Cranmer, Matthew Parker, John Jewel, John Whitgift, et al.—are frequently read in a proleptic light as already at work in constructing this middle way formulated by Hooker with his magisterial authority. The marks of this peculiarity of English theology are frequently identified with the embrace of 'neo-Thomistic' scholasticism, hyper-rationalism, Erasmian humanism, or better still a mix of all three. According to the 'exceptionalist' model of English Reformation, the construction of the Anglican middle way is ipso facto a rejection of the doctrinal norms of the continental magisterial reformers, and therefore with fog in the Channel, the continent is very effectively cut off.

In a recent book, Diarmaid MacCulloch summarises this commonly received hermeneutic by winsomely describing the English Reformation of the sixteenth century as a 'theological cuckoo in the nest'. This charming simile suggests that the 'egg' of Protestant reform is laid in a 'Romish' nest. The 'egg' of Reform is the affirmation of a cluster of key Reformation doctrines, such as one finds, for example, in the Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion—I) the authority of Scripture alone (*sola scriptura*) is sufficient to reveal the way to salvation without the necessary addition or mediation of ecclesiastical traditions (art. 5); justification by faith alone (*sola fide*), that is the putting away of sin without any reference to the merit of good works; salvation by grace alone (*sola gratia*) without reference to natural human capacity, or voluntary obedience to the law; and by Christ alone (*solus Christus*), that is, without the mediation of the saints. To continue with the other half of MacCulloch's simile, the 'nest' adopted by the Protestant cuckoo figures the ancient structures of government and worship of the Church—the hierarchy of bishops, the complex medieval constitutions of the cathedral and collegiate foundations, the traditional liturgical forms, the splendour of a sensuous worship, the retention of images, candlesticks, stained glass, the ancient vestments, etc. etc. Much

² *FLE* 6/1: 6–7

of these outward institutional and liturgical forms under Edward, and later under Elizabeth, render a 'pre-Reformation' appearance to the English Church as compared with some of the more radically iconoclastic expressions of reform on the continent, as, for example, in Zurich or Geneva. This comparison was duly noted by more radical Protestants in the sixteenth century—called Puritans, or Separatists, or Disciplinarians, depending on the specific thrust of their criticism of the Settlement. These more 'radical' reformers saw themselves and came to be identified by later historians as representative of a mainstream continental Protestantism whereas, in actuality, the sixteenth-century debate from the outset takes on quite a different aspect with respect to the question of religious identity. This is where Vermigli becomes particularly useful as a 'touchstone' of Reformed orthodoxy regarding the history of the Elizabethan Church and Commonwealth. Indeed the vexed question of interpreting exactly 'what it is to be reformed' in the Elizabethan context is our chief motive for examining more closely the influence of Vermigli on the self-understanding of the English Church. That a continental figure such as Vermigli could be regarded by his contemporaries in England as a leader and determiner of theological opinion of the day challenges deep-seated assumptions in received interpretation. Indeed, the more one examines the thought and influence of Vermigli as it bears upon the Elizabethan Church, the more difficult it becomes to sustain the exceptionalist claims of modern historiography.

From Oxford to Zurich

Late in the year 1553, at the peak of a remarkably distinguished academic career, Peter Martyr Vermigli departed hastily from England en route to Strasbourg and Zurich. The great Italian reformer had served for six years as Regius professor of divinity in the University of Oxford at the personal invitation of Thomas Cranmer, Archbishop of Canterbury. While at Oxford, Vermigli had participated in a critical disputation on the Eucharist, assisted Cranmer in the revision of the Book of Common Prayer (1552), and served on a royal commission for the reform of the canon law. Following the death of Edward VI, the course of the Reformation in England was suddenly reversed. During the ensuing persecution of Protestants under Queen Mary, numerous English scholars soon followed Vermigli to Strasbourg and thence to Zurich where they continued to hear his lectures and to promote with him the cause of

religious reform throughout Europe. Several of these Marian exiles in Zurich were to become prominent players in the Elizabethan Settlement; among them were no fewer than six future bishops, a clutch of Privy Counsellors, and some of the leading lights of humanist, classical scholarship in the universities of Oxford and Cambridge. Of twenty-three episcopal appointments made in the period 1559–62, fourteen were returned Marian exiles.³ Among Elizabeth's newly appointed bishops six had been Bullinger's guests at Zurich: John Jewel of Salisbury, Richard Cox of Ely, John Parkhurst of Norwich, Edwin Sandys of Worcester, James Pilkington of Durham, Robert Horne of Winchester. In addition to these, two Edwardine bishops, John Ponet of Winchester (died 1557) and John Hooper (martyred 1555) of Gloucester, were also entertained by Bullinger in the Pfaarhaus located in the precincts of the Großmünster during the latter part of the reign of Henry VIII. Among the distinguished company of scholars and clerics treated to the famous Tigurine hospitality were John Cheke,⁴ Thomas Smith,⁵ Richard Morison,⁶ Thomas Becon,⁷ Laurence Humphrey,⁸ Thomas Sampson,⁹ and Thomas Lever¹⁰ to name just a few of the great and the good who found their way to Zurich and the company of Vermigli and Bullinger during the mid-1550s. During the relatively brief period of the Marian exile, 1553 to 1558, and owing in some considerable degree to the personal influence of Vermigli himself, strong links were forged between these exiles and their Zurich hosts which would have a profound and lasting influence on the subsequent course of the Reformation in England.

Following the accession of Elizabeth in 1558 and the return home of the exiles, an extensive correspondence flourished between England and their former hosts at Zurich which was to last for more than a generation. Although invited to return to his former situation as Regius professor,¹¹

³ For an analysis of the composition of the Elizabethan bench of bishops, see Scott Wenig, *Straightening the Altars: The Ecclesiastical Vision and Pastoral Achievements of the Progressive Bishops under Elizabeth I, 1559–1579* (New York: Peter Lang, 2000), pp. 22 ff.

⁴ Regius Professor of Greek, Cambridge (1540–51), royal tutor (1544–49) and Principal Secretary (1553).

⁵ Clerk of the Privy Council (1547), Secretary of State (1548–49, 1572–77) and Ambassador to France (1562–66).

⁶ Ambassador to Charles V (1550), Gentleman of the Privy Chamber (1539).

⁷ Poet, schoolmaster and prolific author.

⁸ President of Magdalen College, Oxford (1562–89).

⁹ Dean of Christ Church, Oxford (1561–65).

¹⁰ Master of St John's College, Cambridge (1551–53).

¹¹ John Jewel to Peter Martyr Vermigli, 28 April 1559, *The Zurich Letters: or, the correspondence of several English bishops and others, with some of the Helvetican reformers, during the reign of*

Vermigli remained in Zurich for the final years of his life and continued to correspond frequently with influential Elizabethan divines, including Richard Cox, formerly Chancellor of Oxford and now bishop of Ely, his erstwhile notary John Jewel, recently appointed Bishop of Sarum, and Thomas Sampson, Dean of Christ Church, Vermigli's former college.¹² In the disputes which arose as a consequence of the Settlement frequent appeals by numerous leading figures of the Elizabethan establishment were made to the judgement of both Vermigli and his host Heinrich Bullinger, Zwingli's successor as Antistes of Zurich.¹³ After Vermigli's death his correspondence with John Hooper, Edwardian Bishop of Gloucester, was appealed to extensively by antagonists on both sides of the Elizabethan Vestiarian Controversy of the mid-1560s. In 1570 Bullinger was enlisted by Richard Cox to respond to Pius V's bull *Regnans in excelsis* excommunicating Elizabeth and absolving her subjects of their obedience.¹⁴ After Bullinger's death in 1575 this correspondence continued with his successor as Antistes in the Church of Zurich, Rudolph Gwalther, thereby continuing the 'Zurich connection' which Vermigli had done so much to foster at the end of his career.

The influence of Vermigli's political theology is particularly evident in the theory underpinning the political institutions of the Elizabethan

Queen Elizabeth, 1558–1579, first and second series, trans. and ed. Hastings Robinson (Cambridge: Parker Society, 1842, 1845). (hereafter ZL), 1: 20. 'The Queen both speaks and thinks most honourably of you: she lately told Lord [Francis] Russell that she was desirous of inviting you to England, a measure which is urged both by himself and others, as far as they are able.' See also Sir Anthony Cook's effusive letter to Vermigli of 12 February 1559, ZL, 2: 13.

Vermigli was formally invited to return to his post as Regius Professor of Divinity at Oxford in 1561, but excused himself for reasons of health and his obligations to the Senate of Zurich. See Vermigli's response to Earl Russell in 'Letter to the Right honourable the Duke [sic] of Bedford', *Divine Epistles*, trans. Anthonie Marten (London: H. Denham, 1583), fos 164–5: 'Truehe if I might haue mine owne will I woulde no lesse serue the church of *Englande* than before time I haue doone: howbeit neither mine age nor the strength of my body wil any longer indure the same, being not able to indure a viage solong, so diuers and not altogether easie . . . it seemeth better for me that I remaine where I am.' See also his reply 'to a verie honourable Prince in England', *Divine Epistles*, fos 127–8: 'it standeth thus with mee, that I am appointed to the citie and Church of *Tiguric*, and therefore I am not at my owne libertie'.

¹² See ZL.

¹³ Diarmaid MacCulloch, 'Bullinger and the English-Speaking World', in Emidio Campi (ed.), *Der Nachfolger: Heinrich Bullinger (1504–1575). Leben, Denken, Wirkung* (Zurich: Theologische Verlag, 2005).

¹⁴ Letter of Richard Cox to Heinrich Bullinger, ZL, 1: 220–1. The bull is printed in John Jewel, *Works*, ed. John Ayre for the Parker Society [PS] (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1850), vol. 4, pp. 1131–2. See David J. Keep, 'Bullinger's Defence of Queen Elizabeth', in Ulrich Gäßler und Erland Herkenrath, *Heinrich Bullinger, 1504–1575: gesammelte Aufsätze zum 400. Todestag* (Zurich: Theologischer Verlag, 1975), pp. 231–41.

Settlement, chief among them the Royal Supremacy, the linchpin of the 1559 constitution. In his defence of the royal headship of the church in the 1570s against the attacks of the disciplinarian puritans Thomas Cartwright and Walter Travers, John Whitgift, then Master of Trinity College, Cambridge, relied closely on the political writings of Vermigli, Bullinger and two other prominent Zwinglians—Gualther and Wolfgang Musculus of Berne.¹⁵ The controversy between Whitgift and promoters of the Genevan model of reform in England is in many respects a replay of the dispute on the continent between Erastus and Theodore Beza, Calvin's successor in Geneva.¹⁶ In his duel with Cartwright in the Admonition Controversy Whitgift appealed to Vermigli among other representatives of the *Schola Tigurina* in support of his Erastian ecclesiology. Richard Hooker's celebrated defence of the Elizabethan constitution published towards the end of the century is an elaboration of this same political theology so well articulated by Vermigli in his Commentaries on the Books of Judges, Samuel and Kings.¹⁷ It is worthy of note that while he was a student and later a fellow at Corpus Christi College, Oxford in the late 1560s and early 1570s, Hooker's patron was John Jewel, Vermigli's disciple and secretary who had earlier followed his master into exile at Zurich; Hooker's later patron while writing *Of the Lawes of Ecclesiastical Politie* was another distinguished Erastian, John Whitgift, Archbishop of Canterbury during the latter half of Elizabeth's reign (1583–1604). With Vermigli positioned close to its hub, this network of intellectual influence lies behind a continuous and coherent tradition of political theology in England through much of the latter half of the sixteenth century, a tradition which finds its key inspiration across the Channel, principally in Zurich.

Professor Robert Kingdon has provided us with an excellent *prolegomenon* to the study of Peter Martyr Vermigli's political thought in his introduction to a selection of *scholia* drawn from his biblical commentaries.¹⁸ Kingdon makes a strong case on several grounds to justify further critical study of Vermigli's political writings. First, the proportion of his *œuvre* devoted to political concerns is substantial. Consequently, if one is

¹⁵ *Works of John Whitgift, DD, Archbishop of Canterbury*, ed. John Ayre for the Parker Society, 3 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1851), iii, pp. 295–325.

¹⁶ Ruth Wesel-Roth, *Thomas Erastus: ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der reformierten Kirche und zur Lehre von der Staatssouveränität* (Lahr and Baden: M. Schauenburg, 1954).

¹⁷ See Joan Lockwood O'Donovan, *Theology of Law and Authority in the English Reformation* (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1991), pp. 151–3. See also W. J. Torrance Kirby, *Richard Hooker's Doctrine of the Royal Supremacy* (Leiden and New York: E. J. Brill, 1990), ch. 4.

¹⁸ Robert M. Kingdon, *The Political Thought of Peter Martyr Vermigli* (Genève: Librairie Droz, 1980), pp. 1–xxiii.

to address Vermigli's thought seriously as a whole, one simply cannot neglect his extensive writings on such topics as the authority of princes and magistrates, civil and ecclesiastical jurisdiction, exile and banishment, treason, sedition, tyranny, rebellion and war. An easily accessible gauge of the relative importance of these writings is the sheer length of the fourth part of the *Loci Communes*, 'wherein is intreated of the outward meanes which God useth for the salvation of his people, and preservation of mans societie'.¹⁹ Vermigli devotes several times as much space to the treatment of these and related questions as compared with the equivalent sections in the final versions of Calvin's *Institute* (1559) or Philipp Melancthon's *Common Places* (1559).²⁰ By far his most influential publication in England, Vermigli's *Loci* were compiled posthumously by his editor Robert Masson, minister of the French congregation in London, and went through fourteen editions between 1576 and 1656. An English translation by Anthony Marten, 'Sewer of the Chamber' to Queen Elizabeth, ²¹ took Masson's edition as its base with a minor rearrangement of the topics, and included a large appendix of letters and *opuscula*. Many of the letters were Vermigli's correspondence with such returned Marian exiles as Thomas Sampson, his close confidant John Jewel, and Francis Russell, second Earl of Bedford. The treatise adheres to an order and arrangement closely analogous to that of Calvin's *Institute of the Christian Religion*.²² It could be argued that Vermigli's heavier weighting of selected *topoi* in favour of matters political is attributable to a shift in theological focus at the time of editing, however, and therefore not representative of Vermigli's theological emphasis. After all, the first edition of the *Loci Communes* appeared less than four years following the watershed event of the St Bartholomew's Day massacre in 1572.²³ Consequently, the selection of *topoi* might well reflect the more pressing political concerns of Protestants in the early 1570s (and of Vermigli's Huguenot editor then living in London in exile) rather than the reformer's own theological

¹⁹ *Loci Communes*, ed. Robert Masson (London: John Kingdon, 1576). See Joseph C. McLelland, *Peter Martyr's Loci Communes: A Literary History* (Montreal: McGill, 2007).

²⁰ Kingdon, *Political Thought*, p. iii.

²¹ The Sewer or 'scutellarius' was responsible for keeping the utensils and setting the royal table. Marten was appointed before 1560 and retired some time after 1590. He latterly had the privilege of appointing a vicar to perform his tasks which no doubt allowed him the necessary leisure for the task of translating Vermigli's voluminous work.

²² Robert le Maçon, Sieur de la Fontaine, was formerly minister in Orléans. See Joseph C. McLelland, *Peter Martyr's Loci Communes*, p. 10.

²³ Robert M. Kingdon, *Myths about the St. Bartholomew's Day Massacres, 1572–1576* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988).

agenda. On closer examination, however, of the biblical commentaries themselves—especially those on the books of Judges, Samuel and Kings—the relative emphasis on political questions in Masson's edition of the *Loci Communes* actually reflects very accurately Vermigli's engaged scholarly interest in political questions.

There are several possible explanations of this preoccupation with political concerns. As all of his biographers from Simler on point out, Vermigli's career was shaped to a considerable degree by his repeated exposure to coercive political forms of religious persecution.²⁴ The experiences of being forced to flee Lucca in 1542 under pressure from the papal curia, and of having to move repeatedly from one academic appointment to another throughout the remainder of his career owing to differences with the host establishments in both Strasbourg and England, doubtless raised acute questions for Vermigli concerning the relation between religion and political power.²⁵

The Prominence of Monarchy in Vermigli's Political Thought

In many respects, the content and general formulation of Vermigli's political ideas is not notably original. Unlike other leading representatives of the Reformed tradition who had been formed largely by urban and republican circumstances (as were Zwingli and Bullinger in Zurich, for example, or Calvin and Beza in Geneva), his writing shows that Vermigli owed much to his academic, ecclesiastical, and political experience of the monarchical institutions of England. This influence came, moreover, at a decisive turning point in his career as a theologian and biblical scholar—i.e. immediately preceding the period of his most intensive writing on political matters, which was to occupy him almost entirely from the time

²⁴ Josiah Simler, *An Oration of the life and death of that worthy man and excellent Divine d. Peter Martyr Vermiglius, professor of Divinitie in the Schoole of Zurichke*, in *Another Collection of certaine Divine matters and doctrines of the same M. D. Peter Martyr*, translated and partly gathered by Anthonie Marten (London: John Day, 1583). See also the excellent biography by Mark Taplin in the *ODNB*.

²⁵ Vermigli was compelled to leave his first appointment in Strasbourg in 1547 owing to fallout of the imperial defeat of the Schmalkaldic League. Charles V sought to impose a Catholic regime throughout the empire, and so Vermigli gladly accepted Thomas Cramer's invitation to take up an appointment at Oxford. Similarly with the demise of Edward VI he was forced to flee again to the continent and returned to Strasbourg in 1553. Owing to differences with the newly re-entrenched Lutheran establishment there, he finally found his way to Zurich in 1556, where he remained until his death in 1562.

of his flight from England in 1553 until his death ten years later in Zurich. Kingdon points out that 'Vermigli's political thought was in many subtle ways more appropriate to the needs of a principality, to a monarchic government seeking to control a somewhat larger religious establishment'.²⁶ Thus Vermigli's close attention to political themes in his lectures in the free imperial city of Strasbourg and the republic of Canton Zurich, acquires added significance for his subsequent influence on political theology in England. The proportion of the political writings to the corpus as a whole, the heavy emphasis on critique of papal claims to jurisdiction (and on related questions concerning the right relation between religious and political power), and especially the positive emphasis on monarchical constitutional structures, are all important reasons for viewing Vermigli's contribution to later-sixteenth-century English political theology as distinctive and worthy of further exploration and inquiry.

The political *scholia* scattered throughout Vermigli's biblical commentaries include expositions of passages in the Epistles to the Corinthians and the Romans, and especially of Romans 13, the *locus classicus* for Christian political theory going back to the early Church fathers.²⁷ Vermigli's lectures on Romans belong to his Oxford period (1547–53), and were published in Basel in 1558, five years after his ejection from the Regius Chair.²⁸ An English translation by 'H. B.', most likely Sir Henry Billingsley—a classicist perhaps best known for his translation of Euclid's *Elements* published in 1570—appeared ten years later 'cum gratia & privilegio regia' with a dedication to Sir Anthony Cooke, the evangelical humanist scholar who attended Vermigli's lectures in Strasbourg as a Marian exile.²⁹ By far the largest proportion of the political *scholia*,

²⁶ Kingdon, *Political Thought*, p. iv.

²⁷ See the *scholium* on 1 Cor. 6 'Whether it be lawful for a Christian to go to law', *CP*, IV.16 and 'Of Nobilitie', on Rom. 9-4, *CP*, IV.20 (see n. 82 for complete citation). See also my translation of a portion of his Romans commentary: 'The Civil Magistrate: Peter Martyr Vermigli's Commentary on Romans 13', in J. P. Donnelly, Frank James III and J.C. McLelland (eds), *The Peter Martyr Reader* (Kirkville, MO: Truman State University Press, 1999), pp. 221–37.

²⁸ *In Epistolam S. Pauli Apostoli ad Romanos... Commentarii* (Basel: P. Perna, 1558; repr. 1568), and republished by A. Gesner in Zurich, 1559 and two further editions by J. Lancelot in Heidelberg, 1612 and 1613. The commentary was published in English translation a decade later in 1568. *Most learned and fruitfull commentaries of D. Peter Martyr Vermiglius Florentine, professor of divinitie in the schole of Tigur, vpon the Epistle of S. Paul to the Romanes wherein are diligently [and] most profitably entreated all such matters and chiefe common places of religion touched in the same Epistle* (London: John Day, 1568).

²⁹ See BL Add. MS 29, 549, fos 16–17, dated 15 October 1558. *OL*, I: 139–40; *ZL*, II: 13–14. See Anita McConnell, 'Billingsley, Sir Henry (d. 1606)', *ODNB*.

however, derives from Vermigli's extensive Old Testament commentaries, specifically on the history of ancient Israel in the Books of Judges,³⁰ Samuel, and Kings.³¹ As with his other major exegetical works, all three commentaries were based on lecture series: the lectures on Judges were given at the College of St Thomas in Strasbourg during Vermigli's second period there (1553–56) following his expulsion from England, while his lectures on Samuel and Kings were delivered at Zurich (1556–62). Thus, three major Old Testament commentaries occupied Vermigli's scholarly attention for much of the final decade of his life. Of the three, the Judges Commentary weighs in most heavily with political concerns. It went through several Latin editions and appeared in an anonymous English translation in 1564.³² There is a lengthy summary of the argument of this commentary by Francis, Second Earl of Bedford in a commonplace book in the family archive at Woburn Abbey.³³ This was the same 'Prince in England' who, not long after Elizabeth's accession, was instrumental in persuading the young Queen to invite Vermigli to return to his post as Regius Professor at Oxford—a generous offer very politely declined.³⁴ Vermigli's preoccupation with the concrete ethical, political and historical concerns of ancient Israel in this final, mature phase of his career as an interpreter of the Hebrew Scriptures is surely significant, especially for his very thorough treatment of questions related to kingship. Of particular interest is the fact that Vermigli delivered lectures on Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* at Strasbourg at the same time that he embarked on

³⁰ Initially a select portion of the Judges Commentary on the right of resistance to tyrants was first published in Strasbourg under the title *A Treatise of the cohabitacyon of the faithful with the unfaithfull* (Strasbourg: W. Rihel, 1555). The complete commentary was prepared by Vermigli himself for publication in Zurich: *In librum Iudicum D. Petri Martyris Vermiglii Florentini ... commentarij doctissimi* (Zurich: C. Froschauer, 1561; repr. 1565, 1571, 1582). [Republished Heidelberg: J. Lancelot, 1609.]

³¹ *In Duos Libros Samuelis Prophetiae ... Commentarii* (Zurich: C. Froschauer, 1564; repr. 1567, 1575; and by J. Wolf, 1595); *Melachim id est, Regum libri duo posteriores cum Commentariis* (Zurich: C. Froschauer, 1566; repr. 1571, 1581; Heidelberg: Andreas Cambier, 1599).

³² *Most fruitful & learned commentaries of Doctor Peter Martir Vermil Florentine, professor of divinitie, in the Universitie of Tygure, with a very profitable tract of the matter and places* (London: John Day, [1564]). This edition has prefatory letters of the publisher, John Day, addressed to Robert Dudley, Early of Leicester and of Vermigli to the 'scholararchs' of the Academy at Strasbourg where he delivered the lectures; cited hereafter as *CJ*.

³³ The Commentary of Master Peter Martyr upon the Booke of Judges', *Commonplace Book of Francis, second Earl of Bedford*, Bedford Estate Archive, HMC 10, fos 20. There are marginal notes on this text in the hand of Francis the fourth Earl (*id.* 1641).

³⁴ See *CP* (1583), Part IV, 'Divine Epistles', pp. 127–8; *ZL*, II.57. See also G. C. Goreham, *Gleanings of a few scattered ears during the period of the Reformation in England, and of the times immediately succeeding: AD 1533 to AD 1588* (London: Bell and Daldy, 1857), pp. 420–2.

his great exegetical odyssey into the history of the emerging kingdom of ancient Israel.³⁵

The Godly Prince in the *Commentary on Judges*

One helpful example of Vermigli's close association of the knowledge of God with political action may be found in his *Commentary on Judges* 8 (*CJ*) where he devotes a *scholium* of moderate length (at least by his standard) to Israel's disregard for divine law in seeking Gideon to rule over them as their king.³⁶ 'Then the men of Israel sayd unto Gideon: Reigne thou over us, both thou and thy sonne and thy sonnes sonne, bycause thou hast delivered us out of the hand of Madian [sic]. And Gideon answered them: I will not raygne over you, neither shall my child raygne over you, the Lord shal raygne over you.'³⁷ The kingdom of Israel is not the Israelites' to give. In Vermigli's view, Gideon's refusal of the kingdom is based on his better discernment of the law. Unlike the men of Israel, Gideon recalls Deuteronomy (17:15): 'it is written, that he should be a king whom god has chosen'. According to Vermigli's exegesis, the question is whether the law of God or the law of men will rule, and thus whether the divine sovereignty is duly recognised. Unlike the nations, it was the case with the tribe of Israel that 'the right to appointe a king, belonged to god, and not unto men'.³⁸ From this starting point of matter-of-fact exposition Vermigli proceeds to open wide the hermeneutical gates. Assuming the traditional hermeneutical view that the Old and New Testaments convey a common, continuous, and coherent teaching, Vermigli compares Gideon's refusal of the kingdom to Christ's rejection of the crowd's offer in the Gospel of John. 'When Jesus therefore perceived

³⁵ *In Primum, Secundum, et Initium Tertii Libri Ethicorum Aristotelii ad Nichomachum* (Zurich: C. Froschauer, 1563). See also the recent annotated English translation by Joseph McLelland and Emidio Campi (eds), *Commentary on Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics*, Peter Martyr Library, vol. 9 (Kirksville, MO: Truman State University Press, 2006).

³⁶ *CJ* fos 147 r^v–150r^v.

³⁷ Judges 8, 22, 23. *CJ* fo. 147 r^v.

³⁸ *CJ* fo. 147 r^v. On this passage, Francis Russell reveals a degree of discomfort with the argument that 'the estate of the hebrews was far better under the judges than under the kings'. He remarks further that 'the people was never led away captive under the Judges although they were often times oppressed by outward tyrants, for their wickedness ... there were very few good and godly kings, but almost all the Judge were good and godly. Yet the kings are not condemned at any time by any testimony or iudgment of the Scripture as far as I can tell.' See Bedford Estate Archive, HMC 10, fo. 2.

that they would come and take him by force, to make him a king, he departed again into a mountain himself alone' (Jn 6:15). Like Gideon, Christ 'wayghed the maner of his vocation, and for that his kingdome was not of this worlde'.³⁹ By their refusals, both Gideon and Christ sought to preserve a clear distinction between the human and divine sources of right. In this respect, at least, Gideon is a 'type' of Christ. Vermigli moves swiftly to the substance of the *scholium* with his introduction of the institution of the Papacy as an 'anti-type':

Gideon refuseth not the principality, as though he would not labour in the publicke wealthe: but because he understode that it was no lawfull vocation: which the Popes also ought to regard . . . The Pope ought also to loke upon the words of Christ: Kinges of the nations (sayth the Lord) beare rule over theyr subjectes: but ye shall not do so . . . This is to govern the church, not to command, but to serve.⁴⁰

Thus for Vermigli, unlike the examples of Gideon and Christ, the Bishops of Rome have come to confuse human right with divine right, the kingdom of this world with the heavenly kingdom, and earthly authority with spiritual authority.

This *scholium* on Judges 8 provides Vermigli with an opportunity to address the nature of ecclesiastical jurisdiction and to explore the sticky question of its relation to civil governance. Underlying these political and ecclesiological concerns, Vermigli's interpretation never moves far from the underlying question of the right knowledge of God. Failure to recognise the rightful source of ecclesiastical power in the divine gift rather than in human tradition, precedence, and ambition, where 'there is no regarde had to the graces and giftes of God, but onely to the place and seate . . . This undoubtedly was the fountayne, of[s]pring, and beginning of al evils and superstitions'.⁴¹ This is a radical claim on Vermigli's part. It is not simply doctrinal error—for example, concerning Christology or the Trinity, or soteriological distinctions regarding the priority of forensic justification to sanctification—that leads to the corruption of religion, although some of these primary doctrines are deeply implicated in the ecclesiological issues. The converse is *also* the case. The practical organisation of the Church, the constitutional arrangements of power within and beyond it in relation to the commonwealth, are here understood as a complex source promoting and compounding the corruption of both

³⁹ *CJ* fo. 147 r^v.

⁴⁰ *CJ* fo. 148 r^v; Kingdon, *Political Thought*, p. 19.

⁴¹ *CJ* fo. 148 v^v; Kingdon, *Political Thought*, p. 19.

doctrine and practice. The political and the theological—'τὸ πρακτικόν' and 'τὸ θεωρητικόν'—are bound closely together. Institutional corruption breeds faulty theological discernment, and vice versa in a vicious cycle of ever increasing confusion.

In the course of his argument, Vermigli takes issue with the received interpretation of ecclesiastical history by the Canon lawyers. In particular, he cites the *Epistles* of Gregory the Great as evidence that the early Christian bishops were in fact, like Gideon, benefactors of their community who rightly distinguished between the divine and human sources of power. Their exhibition of holiness, their constancy of faith, fervent charity and willingness to embrace martyrdom, all contributed to cultivating the common weal. Having eventually delivered the Church from Roman persecution, just as Gideon had done for Israel out of the hand of Midian, 'supreme power and kingdome in the church was in a manner offred . . . which they like Gideon refused with a greater spirit and singular modesty'.⁴² Gregory deplored the pretension of John of Constantinople to the title of 'universal Patriarch', and he maintained that such a title impinged upon the dignity of the Emperor.⁴³ Vermigli is not persuaded, however, by Gregory's claim that it was this John 'who did first usurpe unto himself the title of 'universality''.⁴⁴ The reformer cites one of his favourite authorities, Theodoret, who refers to Nestorius by the name of 'universal patriarche'.⁴⁵ Gregory's objection was that 'if the universal head be so ordeyned of men, by the ruine and corruption of such a head, the church also shall perishe together'.⁴⁶ John of Constantinople's assertion of his universal episcopal jurisdiction was also an affront to the imperial dignity. This Gregory 'counted for an absurdity . . . a thinge unjust and not to be suffred . . . the same belongeth unto Antechrist' in a letter to

⁴² *CJ* fo. 148 r^v; Kingdon, *Political Thought*, p. 16.

⁴³ 'But our men now a dayes thinke it necessarye that Cesar should be subject to him: yea they have often times resisted emperors, many times wearied them, and sometimes moved them out of theyr place. And yet Gregory theyr father detesteth and inveigheth against it . . . Gregory the Great, 'Letter to Constantinus Augustus', *Epistles*, lib. V, ind. xii, no. 21; PL 77.749.

⁴⁴ Vermigli also points out that the Emperor Justinian attributed the title of 'universality' to diverse patriarchs. He quotes from the fourth portion of the *Corpus Iuris Civilis*, viz. *Novellae constitutiones*, authenticum collatio 1, Tit. 3, Novell. 3 and 5. When Justinian issued new laws they were added to the *Corpus* under a fourth division, the 'Novellae', quoted here. See Gregory the Great, *Epistles*, lib. V, ind. xii, nos. 18; PL 77.740. Kingdon, *Political Thought*, p. 18.

⁴⁵ Theodoret, *Haereticarum Fubularum Compendium*, IV.12, 'De Nestorio', PG 83.1156.

⁴⁶ Gregory the Great, 'Letter to Sabianus the Deacon', *Epistles*, lib. V, ind. xii, no. 19; PL 77.744; and 'Letter to Mauricius Augustus', *ibid.* no. 20; PL 77.745–6. Kingdon, *Political Thought*, p. 17.

Constantinus Augustus.⁴⁷ In this respect Vermigli's approach to the imperial office is thoroughly consistent with the standard contemporary Tudor apologies for the Royal Supremacy.⁴⁸ In a formulation that would sit well both in England and Zurich, Vermigli argues that 'Kinges and magistrates when they are godlye, in my judgement oughte to have the chiefe place in the church: and to them it pertaineth, if religion be it administered, to correcte the defaultes. For therefore they beare the sword to maintayne Gods honor.'⁴⁹ While the Council of Chalcedon acknowledged the prerogative of Rome, again by Gregory's account, no man used the title 'because our elders being men most holy, saw it was not meete for any mortal man. Onely Christ is universal hed of the Church'.⁵⁰

The thrust of Vermigli's argument is to drive a wedge between the pristine practice of the early Church and the later corruption of the papacy, and furthermore to identify the ecclesiology of Reform with the former, combined with a spirited defence of Royal Supremacy. The papal claim to universal headship 'cannot be meete for any man'. *Solus Christus*, on this account, was just as important a formulation for ecclesiastical jurisdiction as it was for orthodox soteriology. 'It belongeth onely to Christe, to distribute unto his members spiritual mocions, illustration [i.e. cleansing] of the minde, and eternall life.'⁵¹ In his Epistle to the Ephesians Paul 'sayth this of Christe, that god had geven hym to be the head of the body of the church'.⁵² Vermigli's implication is that the violation of Christ's sole headship by papal claims to universal jurisdiction leads in turn to soteriological corruption and, indeed, to epistemological as well as hermeneutical confusion: the papal claim to a universal patriarchy 'undoubtedly was the fountayne, of[s]pring, and beginning of all evils and superstitions'.⁵³ Disorder in the sphere of the practical breeds confusion concerning first principles. 'Wherefore if [the universal patriarchy] were eyther for lacke of knowledge or of some rashness, or by the people, or by flaterers geven to any bishop of Rome, it should by the

⁴⁷ 'Letter to Constantinus Augustus', *Epistles*, lib. V, ind. xii, no. 21; PL 77.749. See Vermigli's *scholium* on 1 Sam. 28.3, 'That the charge of Religion belongeth unto Princes', CP, 4.14.2, 246-8.

⁴⁸ See Chap. 2, 'The Godly Prince', in W. J. Torrance Kirby, *The Zurich Connection and Tudor Political Theology* (Leiden and Boston: E. J. Brill, 2007), pp. 59-74.

⁴⁹ Kingdon, *Political Thought*, p. 20. See W. J. Torrance Kirby, 'The Charge of Religion belongeth unto Princes', Peter Martyr Vermigli on the Unity of Civil and Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction', *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte*, 94 (2003): 131-45.

⁵⁰ Gregory the Great, *Epistles*, lib. V, ind. xii, nos. 18, 20 and 43; PL 77.740, 747, 771.

⁵¹ CJ fo. 148 v'; Kingdon, *Political Thought*, p. 20.

⁵² Eph. 1.22. See CJ fo. 148 v'; Kingdon, *Political Thought*, p. 20.

⁵³ CJ fo. 148 v'; Kingdon, *Political Thought*, p. 19.

example of Gideon, Leo, and Gregory have bene refused.'⁵⁴ Having invoked '*solus Christus*' Vermigli then challenges his adversaries to produce a persuasive scriptural justification for the papal claim—*solus Christus* is tied to *sola scriptura*, and thus political theology to the Reformed standard of hermeneutics.

Vermigli the church historian seeks to demonstrate conclusively that the Roman primacy came into existence through the agency of human ambition and cumulative tradition rather than by divine appointment and scriptural sanction, and consequently that divine rule over the Church and its spiritual character has been obstructed. Human custom decreed that in the principal cities 'where merchandises were traded, and where Proconsuls or Presidents governed' the bishops had precedence of honour. Custom here stands for a concept of 'right' of human origin, analogous to the invitation extended to Gideon by the tribe of Israel. While the most able bishops—men like Augustine and Gregory Nazianzus—were relegated to 'small and abjecte bishoprikes', conversely the secular status of cities gave consequence to 'Churches and chayres', i.e. to episcopal seats. It was owing to Rome's pre-eminent civic dignity within the Empire that 'the bishop of Rome began to be preferred above other'.⁵⁵

At this point in his commentary, Vermigli reviews the classic scholastic justification of the tradition of papal primacy through the concept of a 'two-fold' headship, that is by means of a distinction between a visible, earthly headship and an invisible, spiritual rule, the former exercised by Peter and his successors and the latter by Christ himself. Intriguingly he takes up the argument as formulated by John Fisher, Bishop of Rochester, in a sermon preached in 1521 'Agayn[st] the Pernicious Doctrin of Martin Luther' at the behest of Cardinal Thomas Wolsey, then Archbishop of York, papal legate, and Chancellor of England, not to mention the original founder of Vermigli's own college—Christ Church, Oxford.⁵⁶ Vermigli's choice of authority for this scholastic argument was certainly apposite. Fisher, it should be remembered, had been executed in 1535 for his refusal to acknowledge Henry's title of headship of the Church of England, while Wolsey had been deprived of the Chancellorship for his failure to secure Henry's divorce from Catherine of Aragon. Fisher's

⁵⁴ CJ fo. 148 r'; Kingdon, *Political Thought*, p. 19.

⁵⁵ CJ fo. 148 v'; Kingdon, *Political Thought*, p. 20.

⁵⁶ John Fisher, *The sermon of Ioh[ann] in the bysshop of Rochester made agayn the p[er]nicious doctryn of Martin luther: w[ith] i[n] the octaves of the asce[n]sion by the assignme[n]t of the most reuerend fader i[n] god the lord Thomas Cardinal of Yorke [and] legate ex latere from our holy father the pope* ([London]: Wynkyn de Worde, [1521]).

argument for a two-fold headship of the Church is based on a distinction between a metaphorical and a natural head, appealing to the Pauline observation that as the husband is head of the wife, yet every wife also has beside her husband her own natural head.⁵⁷ According to Vermigli, Fisher falls into the 'false Sillogismus of equivocation', for 'if we looke upon the natural head in the church, we shal finde that it is not one head: but looke how manye men there be in it, so many [natural] heades shal there be'. 'When we speake of the head of the Church, we must keepe our selves in the Metaphore,' says Vermigli, 'and as it should be absurde and monstrous, for one man to have two natural heades, so shal it be judged as portentous, for the Churche to have two Metaphorical, that is spiritual heades'.⁵⁸ In the final analysis, Fisher could not have wished to claim that Peter was merely a natural head while Christ was the spiritual head since the force of papal claims to *universality* of jurisdiction depended upon Peter's being a spiritual head as well. This tendency to confuse the natural with the spiritual source of authority lies at the very heart of the problem of kingship in the episode of Gideon as interpreted by Vermigli. The right knowledge of God and his law is indispensable to a constitutional plan of action.

Whence, then, did this tortuous confusion (both institutional and syllogistic) of divine and human authority arise? How does the fateful transition from Gregory the Great, whom Vermigli admires, to Boniface VIII, whom he excoriates, come about?⁵⁹ Vermigli traces the crucial

⁵⁷ For modern critical edition of Fisher's sermons, see *The English Works of John Fisher, Bishop of Rochester (1469-1535): Sermons and Other Writings, 1520-1535*, ed. Cecilia A. Hatt (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 81: 'So as saynt Paule maketh many hedes, sayenge *Caput mulieris vir, caput viri Christus, Christi vero deus*: Se[*e*], here be thre heedes vnto a woman, God, Christ, and hyr housband, and yet besyde al these she hath an heed of hyr owne. It were a monstrous syght to se a woman withouten an heed. What comforte sholde hyr housbande haue vpon hyr? Yf than one woman, not withstandinge she hathe an heed of hyr owne to gouerne hyr accordyng to the wyl and pleasure of hyr housband, yet she hath hyr housband to be hyr heed and Christ to be hyr heed, and God to be hyr heed: how moche rather our mother holy chyrche, which is the spouse of Christ, hath an heed of her owne, that is to say, the pope. And yet neuerthelesse Christ Iesu hyr housbande is her heed, and almyghty God is hyr heed also. But now let vs retourne to our instructuon. Thus than ye vnderstande how that in the vnyuersal chyrche of Chryste remaineth the spyryte of trouthe for [sig. (B)iv]* euer. And that the heed of this chyrche, the pope, is vnder Christ. Bi this breuely it may appeere that the spyryte of Christ is not in Martyn Luther.'

⁵⁸ *CJ* fo. 149 r^v; Kingdon, *Political Thought*, p. 21.

⁵⁹ See Vermigli's extended discussion of Boniface VIII's claims to papal lordship in the Bull 'Unam Sanctam' in his *scholium* on Judges 19, 'Of a Magistrate, and of the difference between Civill and Ecclesiasticall power', *CP* IV.13.7-10, fos 229-31 and IV.13.14, fo. 233. See Kirby, *Zurich Connection*, pp. 59-74.

origins of papal tyranny back to the middle of the eighth century, specifically to the notorious 'False Decretals' of Pseudo-Isidore, known as Isidore Mercator.⁶⁰ He cites in particular the *Clementine Epistles*, part of a *collectanea* of supposed papal letters contained in a compilation of canon laws composed between 847 and 852, and purported to be the authentic writings of Clement I, apostolic Bishop of Rome (88-97). As with the famous 'Donation of Constantine', the so-called Isidorian Decretals were accepted as authentic from the time of their initial appearance until the early Renaissance.⁶¹ Nicholas of Cusa was among the first to raise serious and specific doubts concerning their authenticity.⁶² Discussion of the authenticity of the Decretals gained steam in the sixteenth century in the context of the debate over the ecclesiastical authority of Princes and Magistrates. They were debunked by William Marshall in his English translation of the *Defensor Pacis* of Marsilius of Padua, published under the patronage of Thomas Cromwell in the year of John Fisher's execution.⁶³ The publisher, Thomas Godfray, also printed Marshall's English translation of Lorenzo Valla's famous refutation of the authenticity of the 'Donation of Constantine'.⁶⁴ Following the lead of Cusanus, Valla, Marshall and several others, Vermigli dismisses the entire

⁶⁰ The *Clementine Epistles* are included among fifty-eight out of sixty apocryphal letters or decrees attributed to the popes from St Clement (88-97) to Melchisedes (311-14) and are now known to be forgeries. See the excellent and highly accessible account in the essay by E. H. Davenport, *The False Decretals* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1916), p. xxii. Cf. also William Shafer, *Codices pseudo-Isidoriani: a palaeographic-historical study, Monumenta iuris canonici, Series C: Subsidia* vol. 3 (New York: Fordham University Press, 1971).

⁶¹ With the possible exception of Hincmar in the ninth century and the guarded expression of the Synod of Gerstungen, no one raised his voice against the forgeries till the fifteenth century. See Philip Schaff, *The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge*, vol. IX (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1953), p. 347.

⁶² Nicholas of Cusa, *De Concordantia Catholica*, Bk III, chap. 2, ss. 309-12; see *The Catholic Concordance*, ed. and trans. Paul Sigmund (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), pp. 221-2. Cusanus also debunks 'Donation of Constantine': *De Concordantia*, III.2.294-308 (Sigmund, pp. 216 ff.).

⁶³ Marsilius of Padua, *The defence of peace: lately translated out of laten in to englysshe, with the kynges moste gracious pruillege* (London: Robert Wyer, 1535). Although completed in 1324 and circulated in manuscript, the original Latin text was not printed until 1522 in the Basel edition by Beatus Bildius. *Opus insigne cui titulum fecit autor [Marsilius] Defensorem pacis* (Basel, 1522). Marsilius himself appears not to have been aware of the forgery. See Shelley C. Lockwood, 'Marsilius of Padua and the Case for the Royal Ecclesiastical Supremacy', *TRHS*, 6/1 (1990): 89-119.

⁶⁴ Lorenzo Valla, *De falso credita et ementita Constantini donatione libellus* (Strasbourg, 1506); translated by William Marshall and published by Thomas Godfray under the title *A treatyse of the donation or gyfte and endowme[n]t of possessyons, gyuen and graunted into Syluester pope of Rhome, by Constantyne emperour of Rome* (London: Thomas Godfray, 1534).

edifice of the traditional arguments in support of the papal claim to *plenitudo potestatis* as grounded upon the Pseudo-Isidorian forgeries.⁶⁵ 'Our adversaries,' he says, 'bring the Epistle of Clemens, which is a fained Epistle, as a thing certaine'.⁶⁶ For the sake of argument, Vermigli allows the authenticity of the forgeries in order to show that in any case they fail to provide the required support for papal claims. In a putative Letter to James, brother of the Lord, Clement acknowledges him the superscription as 'by the providence of God ye bishop of bishops, governour of the Church which is at Jerusalem, and of al the Churches every where'.⁶⁷ Even a literal reading of the forged Decretals 'maketh vervee multe agaynste those, which have unto the Churches obtruded this Epistle for true, and ratefied. But that can nothing hurt us,' Vermigli insists, 'which is taken out of that epistle, against our doctrine. For we know that it is a fayned thing, as that which was never alledged by any of the fathers . . . these things have I rehearsed, onely that we might understand, howe much Gideon is to be preferred before the Antechristes of Rome'.⁶⁸

Yet again Gideon re-emerges at the surface, although Vermigli implies throughout his exegesis that Gideon has never really been far absent. Indeed, he frames papal claims to a universal patriarchate and to jurisdiction over Christian princes entirely within the exegetical context of Judges 8. Gideon's refusal to reign over the tribe of Israel as their king rests on the testimony of Scripture, viz. Deuteronomy 17, with its clarity of distinction between divine and human authority. He only should be king whom God has chosen. Vermigli's exposition of Scripture, the Fathers, and of Gregory the Great in particular (whose authority was much admired by the canon lawyers), combined with his debunking of the Decretals of Pseudo-Isidore are all marshalled to highlight the central concern of Judges 8—namely, what constitutes a valid measure of authority lawfully given? Through the forged Decretals the canon lawyers had effectively rewritten the pre-Constantinian Patristic record in a

manner suited to the early medieval attempt to assert ecclesiastical independence of and indeed primacy of jurisdiction over royal and imperial power. The magnitude of this rewriting of the Patristic record ought not to be underestimated: scholars now recognise that fully fifty-eight out of sixty apocryphal letters or decrees attributed to bishops of Rome between the apostolic period and the conversion of Constantine, that is from Clement I (88–97) to Melchisedes (311–14), are forgeries. The presence of the occasional authentic document was doubtless a ruse to lend credence to the rest, and thus they serve to compound the forgery.⁶⁹

How, then, is the medieval flexing of the papal muscle an overturning of divine rule? According to Vermigli's interpretation of Judges 8, by submitting to a ruler whose right derived demonstrably from men rather than directly from God, the medieval Church plainly stands as the analogue of the tribe of Israel in the Book of Judges. In effect, in opposition to the godly example set by Gideon, the papacy had failed to weigh whether such jurisdiction had in fact been lawfully established, and in that failure confused the sources of right proper to the heavenly and the earthly kingdoms.⁷⁰ Moreover, in the passage in question Gideon not only refuses to rule on his own part, he also refuses a dynasty: 'Reigne thou over us, both thou and thy sonne and thy sonnes sonne,' to which he replied 'I will not raygne over you, neither shal my child reigne over you.' No merely natural, human succession of authority can displace divine appointment, whether it be a dynastic succession of kings in the case of the tribe of Israel, or an apostolic succession of lordly bishops in the case of the Church. Universal spiritual dominion is Christ's, and Christ's alone. As Gideon refused the offer of the tribe of Israel, so also 'Christ rejected Sathan, when he promised hym all the kingdoms of the world'.⁷¹ And this, Vermigli concludes, 'the Pope considereth not'.

What, then, becomes of the authority of Princes themselves? This was doubtless an equally pressing question to both the Council of Zurich and to a young Queen and her Parliament. If Christ alone is head of the Church, and if Gideon justifiably refused the kingship of Israel, then is all earthly kingship done away? Can there be any earthly rulers of either Church or Commonwealth? Vermigli asks rhetorically, will 'the rule and government of God be therefore excluded, because the Magistrate of a publike wealth, or of Aristocratie, or of a kingdome, is given unto a man'.⁷²

⁶⁹ Davenport, *False Decretals*, p. xxii.

⁷⁰ *CJ* fo. 147 r.; Kingdon, *Political Thought*, p. 16.

⁷¹ Matt. 4:8–10; Luke 4:5–8.

⁷² *CJ* fo. 149 v.; Kingdon, *Political Thought*, p. 22.

⁶⁵ Although attacked relentlessly throughout the sixteenth century by a series of critics including Erasmus, the Centuriators of Magdeburg (1559), and Charles du Moulin, editor of the Canon Law (1554), the authenticity of the Decretals was upheld in the officially sanctioned 1580 edition of the Canon Law. See *Corpus iuris canonici: emendatum et notis illustratum* / Gregorii XIII. Pont. Max. iussu editum; nunc indicibus novis, & appendice Pauli Lancelotti Perusini adauctum (Paris: [s.n.], 1587). The coup de grâce was finally delivered by David Blondel in his *Pseudo-Isidorus et Turrianus Vapulantes: seu Editio et censura nova epistoliarum omnium: quas piissimis vrbis Romae Praesulibus à B. Clemente ad Strictum &c.* (Geneva: Petri Chouët, 1628).

⁶⁶ *CJ* fo. 149 v.; Kingdon, *Political Thought*, p. 22.

⁶⁷ Clement of Rome, *Opera dubia, epist. Decretales*, I, ad Jacobum fratrem Domini, PG 1.463.

⁶⁸ *CJ* fo. 149 v.; Kingdon, *Political Thought*, p. 22.

This was the Anabaptist inference, but most assuredly not Vermigli's, nor indeed that of any of the magisterial Reformers. For the Florentine the authority of the godly civil magistrate does not inherently conflict with the elevation of divine rule. On the contrary, the exercise of jurisdiction in matters of religion exhibits the right relation of human and divine sources of power as expressed through such passages of Scripture as Judges 8: 'forasmuch as the administration, wherewith God governeth publike wealthes, hindreth not the Magistrate, which is his Vicar and Minister. And assuredly God raigned together with David and Josias: and the Israelites at that tyme had a certaine Magistrate, and one of their own, with whom also God himselfe also governed.'⁷³ This passage is significant, for it suggests that it is possible to unite rule by human right and rule by divine right cooperatively yet distinctly, and without the confusion of one with the other, a confusion which Gideon endeavoured to avoid. The problem of kingship as Vermigli formulates it mirrors, in this respect, the logic of Chalcedonian Christology: the difficulty is not so much in the conjunction of the natural or human and the supernatural or divine sources of right. Error arises when there is a failure to distinguish clearly between these two sources of power when they are conjoined, as did the Israelites who offered the kingship to Gideon, or the people in John 6 who offered Christ the kingdom, or the Church in upholding the papal hegemony. Indeed, Vermigli tersely sums up the *confusion* of the two natures or sources of power by the name of 'Antechnriste'. Once again Vermigli quotes Gregory against the canon lawyers: 'Wherefore let not our men mervayle, if we sometime cal the bishop of Rome Antechnrist, for asmuch as their Gregory, calledth him by that most goodly title, which wilbe universal bishop.'⁷⁴

Vermigli does not allow that the Anabaptist affirmation of *solus Christus*—Christ's sole claim to spiritual authority over the universal church—annihilates the sovereignty of Princes; on the contrary. The institution of magistrates, whether of a monarchy, a republic, or 'Aristocratia'—the latter perhaps most nearly approximating the constitutional arrangement under the regime of the Judges—such authority in the civil realm of the 'publike wealth' is plainly ordained of God and is thus a lawful mode of rule. 'There was a publike wealth then in Israel, they had Senatours, and in al places ther wer Judges appointed: wherefore

⁷³ *CJ* fo. 149 v^o; Kingdon, *Political Thought*, p. 23.

⁷⁴ *CJ* fo. 147 v^o; Kingdon, *Political Thought*, p. 17.

the forme of the publike wealth could not by men be changed, without great offence.'⁷⁵ In short, the civil constitution in force has divine sanction, and, as Augustine had argued before him, Vermigli proceeds to affirm the lawful authority even of such tyrants as Nero, Domitian, Commodus, and others. He invokes Augustine's theodicy of the authority of magistrates as a remedy for sin (*remedium peccati*)—'God useth them to punish the wickedness of the people: for the synnes of the people, he maketh an hypocrite to raygne, and in his fury he geveth kinges.'⁷⁶ When princes are corrupt they must be obeyed '*usque ad aras*'—that is, 'so farre as religion suffreth'.⁷⁷ And may subjects or 'private men' take it upon themselves to resist a tyrant or to alter the constitution? On this point Vermigli invokes no less an authority in support of passive obedience than Cæsar Augustus, who reprimanded Strabo for speaking ill of Cato: 'he was a good Citizen, which contended that the present state of things should not be changed'.⁷⁸

Aristotle and Scripture

Implicit in Vermigli's exegesis of Judges 8, we would propose, is the Aristotelian dictum that the end of the science of politics is the good for man, and the end of the city to live well and virtuously (εὖ ζῆν). The political science of the canon lawyers undermines the pursuit of this end by promoting the confused rule of the Antichrist.

If so be thou wilt demand, when it is to be thought that God doth govern and rule in other Magistrates? I answer: Then, when this is onely provided for, that Citizens may live virtuously. And forasmuch as piety is of al virtues ye most excellent, the Lord doth then raigne, when althings ar referred unto it. Farther, as touching civil actions, when to every man is rendred his own, and Magistrates governe not for their own commodity, but for the publike utility.⁷⁹

⁷⁵ *CJ* fo. 149 v^o; Kingdon, *Political Thought*, p. 23.

⁷⁶ *CJ* fo. 150 r^o; Kingdon, *Political Thought*, p. 23. See Vermigli's *scholium* on 2 Sam. 3, 'Of Warre', *CP* 4.17, fo. 282. For Augustine, war is frequently the 'remedy for sin' in human history. *De civitate Dei* XIX.12, p. 27.

⁷⁷ *CJ* fo. 150 r^o; Kingdon, *Political Thought*, p. 23.

⁷⁸ Macrobius, *Saturnalia*, II.4.18. *Macrobij Ambrosij Theodosij, uiri consularis & illustris, In Somnium Scipionis lib. II Saturnaliorum lib. VII* (Lyon: Sebastian Gryphius, 1542). *CJ* fo. 150 r^o; Kingdon, *Political Thought*, p. 24.

⁷⁹ *CJ* fo. 149 v^o; Kingdon, *Political Thought*, p. 23.

It is for the sake of piety and the public good that Gideon refused the offer of a crown. It is also for the sake of piety and the public good that Vermigli urges rejection of the 'unlawful Supremacie' of the papacy. Piety recognises what belongs to God and what to men, and how to act on that recognition both privately and politically. In his introduction to the *Nicomachean Ethics* Aristotle claims that government is the principal and architectonic art of all practical activity.⁸⁰ It is the 'master art' that aims at the knowledge and the enjoyment of the Good, and through that aim seeks the goal of beatitude (εὐδαιμονία). By means of his implied identification of the Christian commonwealth with Aristotle's community of virtue, Vermigli attributes the care of religion to the sovereign power of the godly Magistrate. Like Gideon, the Magistrate as benefactor directs the life of the commonwealth towards its highest appointed end and it is through the instrumentality of the Magistrate that the divine purpose of the human enjoyment of God is promoted. It is through the agency of this godly Magistrate that a right distinction is maintained between the divine and human sources of authority, and the community delivered from the confusion of the two that is 'the fountayne, off[s]pring, and beginning of al evils and superstitions'. Constitutional clarity contributes to a clearer understanding of the principles conducive to piety. It is very much in the spirit of Vermigli's exegesis of Judges 8 that Richard Hooker would later claim in his Dedicatory Epistle to Book V of his treatise *Of the Lawes of Ecclesiasticall Politie*:

*By the Sword of God and Gedeon, was sometime the cry of the people of Israel, so it might deservedly be at this day the joyful Song of innumerable multitudes, yea, the Emblem of some Estates and Dominions in the world, and (which must be eternally confest even with tears of thankfulness) the true Inscription, Stile, or Title of all Churches as yet standing within this Realm, By the goodness of Almighty God, and his servant Elizabeth, we are.*⁸¹

Conclusion

Although much neglected by historians and political theorists after 1600 (and only very recently having become a subject of keen scholarly interest), in Edwardine and Elizabethan England Vermigli was regarded by his

⁸⁰ Aristotle, *Ethics*, I.2 (1094a17–1094b10). According to Aristotle, the political art (*technē*) aims at the highest good and 'is most truly the architectonic art'.

⁸¹ FLE V.Ded.10; 5.7.21–8.

contemporaries as a pre-eminent leader of international Reform throughout his career. Moreover, his '*auctoritas*' among members of the Elizabethan establishment,⁸² at least until the late 1580s, was unmatched by any other continental reformer, with the possible exception of Heinrich Bullinger. Vermigli's decisive contributions to the formation of the Elizabethan religious and constitutional settlement are only beginning to receive due acknowledgement by modern historiography. Acknowledgement of Vermigli's influence, combined with that of other Zurich divines on English theology from the accession of Edward VI through the consolidation of the Elizabethan Settlement, opens up possibilities of a fresh perspective on some of the central interpretations and theories concerning the intellectual character of the English Reformation. Of particular importance is the recognition that the Elizabethan establishment understood the task of articulating the principles and aims of the political and religious settlement of 1559, and in particular of the Royal Supremacy, in accord with ideas articulated by Vermigli, Bullinger and other representatives of the *Schola Tigurina*. The received interpretation of the settlement as the work of political exigency and pragmatic compromise *rather than* any clear view of Reformed theological principles—as a 'settlement of religion' but not a genuinely 'religious settlement'—becomes more difficult to sustain the more closely the influence of Vermigli is addressed. Patrick Collinson observed that 'the accession of the Protestant Elizabeth at once revived deeply rooted notions of the Church as a great public corporation, one with the commonwealth and presided over by royal governors'.⁸³ Was this 'Constantinian' Erastian impulse merely pragmatic compromise, or was it reconcilable with the Church of England's claim to adhere to the essential tenets of Reformed Protestant orthodoxy? Was reformed doctrine at some deep underlying level contradictory of the institutions established under the Settlement of 1559? Were theology

⁸² In his dedication of his 1583 edition of Vermigli's *Commonplaces* to Queen Elizabeth, Anthony Marten observes as follows: 'I cannot but call to mind with ioie and reuerence, that this our native countrie did first of all kingdoms in the world, faithfullie receiue, and publicke profess the religion of Christ. And it reioiseth me much more, that after so long and so foule a fall of the house of God, this of all other kingdoms did first openlie indeuour to repaire the ruines thereof: a principall labourer in which worke was D. *Peter Martyr*, who long sustained upon his owne, and almost onlie shouldershoulders the greatest weight of this burthen . . . See *The Commonplaces of the most famous and renowned Diuine doctor Peter Martyr, divided into foure principall parts*, translated and partlie gathered by Anthonie Marten, one of the Sewers of hir Maiesties most Honourable Chamber (London: H. Denham, 1583), fo. Aiii verso–Aiv recto. On Bullinger's *auctoritas* see the first chapter of my *The Zurich Connection*, pp. 9, 25–42.

⁸³ Patrick Collinson, *The Elizabethan Puritan Movement* (London: Cape Press, 1967), p. 24.

and ecclesiology ultimately irreconcilable? Was the Settlement really tantamount to Diarmaid MacCulloch's 'theological cuckoo in the nest', that is, the embrace of a reformed evangelical teaching within an unreformed conservative institutional setting fundamentally at odds with the first principles proclaimed?⁸⁴ Or, alternatively, was the Settlement politically and theologically coherent with the platform of continental magisterial reform? The supposition of such a conflict of theological principle and constitutional practice at the heart of the Elizabethan Church was certainly the common view taken by the Settlement's Disciplinary puritan critics just as it currently colours the interpretation of the Settlement set forward by prevailing 'English exceptionalist' historiography. We would argue that closer examination of the contributions of Peter Martyr Vermigli and the Zurich divines to the formulation of the doctrine and order of the English Church provide a corrective to the usual response to this question, and that Vermigli, as representative of what some have termed 'the other Reformed tradition',⁸⁵ discloses a path of interpretation open to the compatibility of the doctrine and institutions of the Elizabethan Settlement with a coherent, self-consistent vision of reformed orthodoxy.

⁸⁴ Diarmaid MacCulloch, *The Later Reformation in England, 1547–1603*, 2nd edn (New York: Palgrave Press, 2000), p. 29.

⁸⁵ Wayne Baker, *Heinrich Bullinger and the Covenant: The other Reformed Tradition* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 1980).