

NOTATIONES

MAJT 33 (2022): 91-101

THE *EXTRA CALVINISTICUM* IN PETER MARTYR VERMIGLI'S *DIALOGUE ON THE TWO NATURES IN CHRIST* (1561)

by Jae H. Kim

Introduction

IN THE HISTORY OF THE CHURCH, a number of doctrines, especially in the locus of Christology, have often been refined and clarified through the church's engagement with error. One such doctrine is the so-called *extra Calvinisticum*, which came to play an important role in Reformed polemics against the Lutherans concerning the eucharistic presence of Christ in the sixteenth century. In fact, *extra Calvinisticum* was a term of opprobrium used by Lutherans¹ to describe the Reformed position that the eternal Son, who assumed a human nature in his incarnation, maintains his existence beyond human flesh (*extra carnem*) during his earthly ministry and perpetually. Against the Lutherans, who believed that Christ's human nature was ubiquitous by virtue of its union with the divine nature, the Reformed held that since the Son has joined to himself a human nature and has thereby become irrevocably human, he is always omnipresent according to his divinity and he is always spatially circumscribed according to his humanity.

One of the early formulators and defenders of the *extra Calvinisticum* was Peter Martyr Vermigli (1499–1562), the influential Italian reformer who has been called “one of the leading lights from that constellation of theologians who gave formative shape to early Reformed theology.”² According to K. J. Drake, “the appellation of

1. E. David Willis, *Calvin's Catholic Christology: The Function of the So-Called Extra Calvinisticum in Calvin's Theology*, Studies in Medieval and Reformation Thought 2 (Leiden: Brill, 1966), 11; Ivor J. Davidson, “Christ,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Reformed Theology*, ed. Michael Allen and Scott R. Swain (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), 462.

2. Frank A. James III, “Peter Martyr Vermigli: At the Crossroads of Late Medieval Scholasticism, Christian Humanism and Resurgent Augustinianism,” in *Protestant Scholasticism: Essays in Reassessment*, ed. Carl R. Trueman and R. Scott Clark, Studies in Christian History and Thought (Paternoster: Carlisle, 1999), 62. For a biographical introduction

extra Vermiglianum strikes a true chord, as Vermigli more than any other figure of the 1550s–60s defended, elaborated, and developed the *extra*.³ Vermigli's most representative work on Christology was his 1561 *Dialogue on the Two Natures in Christ*,⁴ which he wrote as a rebuttal to a Lutheran work on the ubiquity of Christ's body. As will become clear, Vermigli's argument against the doctrine of ubiquity was thoroughly informed by his doctrine of the *extra Calvinisticum*. He argued that Christ, by virtue of his two natures, is both transcendent and limited, omnipresent and local, everywhere and in a particular place, according to his divine nature and his human nature, respectively, and that this is orthodox, Chalcedonian, biblical Christology.

Historical Background

Before considering Vermigli's *Dialogue*, we will be helped by tracing briefly the events leading up to the writing of that work, beginning with the eucharistic debate between Martin Luther (1483–1546) and Ulrich Zwingli (1484–1531) in the 1520s. Already in Zwingli's *Friendly Exegesis*, written in reply to Luther's argument for the corporeal presence of Christ in the Lord's Supper, we see an articulation of the doctrine of the *extra*.⁵ The doctrine was subsequently given fuller expression at the Marburg Colloquy of 1529, where discussions were held on Christ's eucharistic presence between Luther, supported by Philip Melancthon (1497–1560) and Johannes Brenz (1499–1570), and Zwingli, supported by Johannes Oecolampadius (1482–1531) and others.⁶ There, the Reformed argued that because Christ's body is truly human, it is spatially finite and locatable and that, therefore, having ascended bodily into heaven, he cannot be locally (and corporeally) present in the Supper.⁷

After Zwingli, the doctrine of the *extra* was carried forward through the work of Heinrich Bullinger (1504–1575) and John Calvin (1509–1564). Notably, in the *Consensus Tigurinus* of 1549, the *extra* was set forth as a unifying doctrine between

to Vermigli, see Philip McNair, "Biographical Introduction: Peter Martyr Vermigli," in *Early Writings: Creeds, Scripture and Church*, ed. Joseph C. McLelland, trans. Mariano Di Gangi and Joseph C. McLelland, Peter Martyr Library 1 (Kirksville: Sixteenth Century Journal Publishers, 1994), 3–26; Frank A. James III, "Nunc Peregrinus Oberrat: Peter Martyr in Context," in *Peter Martyr Vermigli and the European Reformations: Semper Reformanda*, ed. Frank A. James III, Studies in the History of Christian Traditions 115 (Leiden: Brill, 2004), xiii–xxv.

3. K. J. Drake, *The Flesh of the Word: The extra Calvinisticum from Zwingli to Early Orthodoxy*, Oxford Studies in Historical Theology (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021), 203.

4. Peter Martyr Vermigli, *Dialogue on the Two Natures in Christ*, ed. and trans. John Patrick Donnelly S.J., Peter Martyr Library 2 (Kirksville: Sixteenth Century Journal Publishers, 1995). Quotations of Vermigli in the *Dialogue* are cited in-text by page numbers in parentheses.

5. Ulrich Zwingli, "Friendly Exegesis, That Is, Exposition of the Matter of the Eucharist to Martin Luther," in *Selected Writings of Huldrych Zwingli*, vol. 2, ed. H. Wayne Pipkin and Edward J. Furcha, trans. H. Wayne Pipkin (Eugene: Pickwick, 1984), 238–385.

6. John Patrick Donnelly, S.J., "Introduction: Eucharistic Controversy and the Reformation," in *Dialogue on the Two Natures in Christ*, ix.

7. Drake, *Flesh of the Word*, 100–1.

Zurich and Geneva.⁸ The *Consensus* affirmed in article XXI that “Christ, as man, is nowhere but in heaven and is to be sought in no other way than by the mind and the understanding of faith”; hence, the idea of a local presence was to be rejected.⁹ It also stated that “although, speaking philosophically, there is no place above the skies, yet the body of Christ, bearing the nature and fashion of a human body, is finite and is contained in heaven as in a place” (article XXV).¹⁰

As a result of the publication and spread of the *Consensus*, a heated and prolonged controversy, known as the Second Eucharistic Controversy, broke out between the Reformed and the Lutherans.¹¹ In 1552, Lutheran theologian Joachim Westphal (1510–1574) published the *Farrago* [. . .] *de coena Domini* and “lumped the teachings of Zwingli and Calvin together and condemned as heretics those who denied a corporeal presence of Christ in the Eucharist and a literal eating of Christ’s body.”¹² More than a dozen books were published between 1555 and 1561 on the issue of Christ’s eucharistic presence, and some two hundred books were issued by 1600.¹³

Although Westphal was reluctant to push the debate into Christology, other Lutheran theologians did move the discussion in that direction. The Lutheran position eventually consolidated around the doctrine of ubiquity led by the Christological thought of Johannes Brenz, who had attended Marburg with Luther in 1529. This is illustrated by the following statement of the Stuttgart Synod of 1559, which Brenz helped to draft:

If opponents should argue against the presence of Christ by reference to the ascension of Christ, we declare that Christ is above all heavens in order to fill everything. Christ is not in a place, but is gone to majesty and glory. This pertains not only to his divine nature, but the man Christ too fills every-thing in an ineffable way. Through the glory of the Father, Christ is present to all things, and they are present to him. This is not possible to understand with reason, only faith can grasp it.¹⁴

In 1561, Brenz set forth the doctrine of ubiquity in his *De personali unione*.¹⁵ His position essentially was that Christ’s divine and human natures “are so conjoined in a

8. “The Consensus Tigurinus (1549),” in *Reformed Confessions of the 16th and 17th Centuries in English Translation*, ed. James T. Dennison Jr. (Grand Rapids: Reformed Heritage Books, 2008–14), 1:538–45. For a helpful introduction to this document, see Emidio Campi, “The *Consensus Tigurinus*: Origins, Assessment, and Impact,” in *Shifting Patterns of Reformed Tradition*, *Reformed Historical Theology 27* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2014), 83–121.

9. “Consensus Tigurinus,” in *Reformed Confessions*, 1:544.

10. “Consensus Tigurinus,” in *Reformed Confessions*, 1:545.

11. Campi, “The *Consensus Tigurinus*,” 118; Philip Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom*, 3 vols. (1877; repr., Grand Rapids: Baker, 1966), 1:279–94.

12. Donnelly, “Introduction,” xiii.

13. Donnelly, “Introduction,” xiv.

14. Drake, *Flesh of the Word*, 144–45.

15. Johannes Brenz, *De personali unione duarum naturarum in Christo, et ascensu Christi in coelum, ac sessione eius ad dextram Dei Patris* (Tübingen: Morhard, 1561).

union that they become one inseparable *hypostasis* or person and their respective properties are mutually communicated so that what is the property of the one nature is appropriated by the other, and wherever the deity is, there is also the humanity.”¹⁶ For Brenz, theology and philosophy, faith and reason, were antithetical in Christology. To take Christ’s words of institution, “This is my body,” in a less than literal manner was to abandon the “School of Christ” for the “School of Aristotle” or the “School of Human Wisdom,” and the Reformed were allegedly guilty of doing this. It is in response to Brenz that Vermigli published the *Dialogue* in 1561, the same year that Brenz’s *De personali unione* was published.

Vermigli’s *Dialogue on the Two Natures in Christ*

The *Dialogue* was Vermigli’s last work, written in the form of a dialogue between Orothetes (“Boundary Setter”), representing Vermigli, and Pantachus (“Everywhere”), representing Brenz. The work mirrors the form of Brenz’s *De personali unione* and extensively quotes Brenz, albeit without ever mentioning his name.¹⁷ As noted in Vermigli’s dedicatory letter to John Jewel, its single purpose is “to show that Christ’s humanity is not everywhere” (5). Vermigli believes the Lutheran position is “something different from and foreign to the Church” (12). Another concern is that Brenz’s position reduces the Christian faith to absurdity (7–8).¹⁸

The *Dialogue* cannot be understood apart from the background of longstanding sacramentarian debate and controversy summarized above. However, that is not to say that the controversy had not moved beyond a focus on the eucharist. The *Dialogue*’s main burden is not the Supper but Christology.¹⁹ Thus, the *extra Calvinisticum* features frequently and plays a significant role in Vermigli’s argument. For Vermigli, the *extra* results from a Chalcedonian Christology and maintains the integrity of the incarnate Son’s humanity. As William Klempa notes, “Vermigli’s watchword is: ‘We want the whole Christ and the whole mediator.’”²⁰ If Christ was not truly man, he could not be the mediator between God and man (1 Tim. 2:5).

16. William Klempa, “Classical Christology,” in *A Companion to Peter Martyr Vermigli*, ed. Torrance Kirby, Emidio Campi, and Frank A. James III, Brill’s Companions to the Christian Tradition 16 (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 337. The Lutheran position was further developed by Martin Chemnitz (1522–1586), who called absolute ubiquity a monstrosity and argued instead that “the Logos may temporarily communicate a divine attribute to the human nature in a supernatural manner as a *donum superadditum*, without thereby setting aside the abiding limitations of humanity; just as fire may give heat and brightness to iron without turning the iron into fire” (Schaff, *Creeeds of Christendom*, 1:292–93).

17. Josiah Simler, *Oration on the Life and Death of Doctor Peter Martyr Vermigli*, ed. and trans. John Patrick Donnelly, S.J., Peter Martyr Library 5 (Kirkville: Sixteenth Century Journal Publishers, 1999), 57; Donnelly, “Introduction,” xvii.

18. In the body of the work, Vermigli writes, “Granted too that to the wise of this world this union seems to result in many irrational consequences, still it is not right for devout men to use this pretext to devise absurd arguments which are opposed to the divine Scriptures and true theology” (39).

19. Drake, *Flesh of the Word*, 165n97.

20. Klempa, “Classical Christology,” 333.

The Circumscribed Nature of Bodies

The *Dialogue* begins with a discussion about the humanity of Christ and the nature of bodies. Vermigli gives an Aristotelian definition of the body, stating that “the human body by its nature and definition must be finite, circumscribed, and limited” and that, therefore, “it cannot come to occupy several places simultaneously or be everywhere” (18).²¹ Limitation, parts, mass, size, and measure are properties intrinsic to a human body and cannot be taken from a body without destroying its very humanness (2, 41, 45). Vermigli affirms this also applies to Christ because Christ assumed true human flesh. Christ was born from a woman (Gal. 4:4). Therefore, “He is a creature as regards his humanity,” and “[a] thing that is created ought to be finite and limited” (49). Even in Christ’s resurrected, glorified state, his body continued to be limited and circumscribed in one place (42).

Vermigli’s charge against the Lutheran doctrine of ubiquity is that it abolishes the human nature of Christ by emptying it of limitation and finitude. The two natures of Christ are “sharply contradictory,” he says, “for they kill off each other.” If the divine Son has assumed a human nature, then he is truly a man. “If he is a man, then he has limits. If he has limits, he is neither immense nor infinite. Who indeed would say at one and the same time about the same thing that it is limited and not limited, finite and not finite? [. . .] What truth can we hold onto if contradictories, in the terminology of the logicians, were simultaneously true?” (38). Here Vermigli invokes the law of non-contradiction: two contradictories cannot possibly be true at the same time. Nothing that has been created—including Christ’s human body—can be somewhere illocally, nonspatially, in “places outside all places,” and no power can possibly cause it to be so (18, 50). Only the divinity is everywhere (19–21).²² In response to the Lutheran position that God’s omnipotence *can* make this possible—a point debated at Marburg—Vermigli argues that the question is not whether God *can* do things but whether God has, in fact, *done* those things (15). “God’s power is not called into question; the problem deals only with his will” (14).²³ Certainly, God, in his

21. Against the charge that the Reformed rely too heavily on Aristotle and place the pagan philosopher above Scripture, reason above revelation, Vermigli replies: “in religious questions we are not in the least tied to men. We embrace the truth, whoever says it, as spoken by the Holy Spirit. [. . .] We don’t agree with the sayings of Aristotle because of the author but because we consider some of his axioms true, in the same way that Paul quoted certain verses of the poets” (14). Later in the *Dialogue*, Vermigli will distance himself from Aristotle’s position on the issue of bodily existence beyond the visible heaven (on this see below).

22. In the course of the *Dialogue*, Pantachus (Brenz) argues that “*everywhere* does not mean any locality. For the Godhead itself is not diffused or spread locally” (92). To this, Vermigli responds that locality cannot be detached from the meaning of *everywhere*. “Even schoolboys know that *everywhere* is an adverb of place”! Vermigli agrees that the Godhead itself is not spread and extended locally, because it is not a body. Christ’s humanity, however, cannot be in a place or “everywhere” except locally since it is corporeal (93). Locality befits Christ’s humanity just as nonlocality befits his divinity.

23. Vermigli is employing a distinction between *potentia absoluta* and *potentia ordinata*, used by Zwingli and Oecolampadius in response to Luther’s appeals to divine omnipotence in

omnipotence, *could* make Christ's body ubiquitous. Still, the onus was on Brenz to "indicate just where in holy Scripture it is stated that the body of Christ is everywhere or in different places at the same time," given the numerous points in Scripture that speak of Christ's absence as to his humanity (Jn. 16:28, 12:8, 11:15; Lk. 24:6, 24:51; Acts 1:10) (15; also 39).²⁴

If he is to be and remain truly human, Christ must be and remain local in his bodily presence. Although the divinity is everywhere by its immensity, "the humanity is not present in every place that the divinity fills" (25). In a clear statement of the *extra Calvinisticum*, Vermigli writes, "the divine Word fills all things, but the humanity hypostatically united to it is confined to its own place" (25). He argues for one hypostasis, in which the two natures are "joined as tightly as possible, but each of them according to its own way and extent" (26). Here we see Vermigli making an important qualification. The two natures are inseparably joined, but in such a way that Christ's humanity neither restricts the divinity within its own narrow limits nor expands itself so that it fills every place where the divinity is (24). In his human nature, Christ is always in a certain place. Through his divine nature, he is always everywhere, such that "according to his visible flesh Christ was on earth, but according to his invisible majesty he was in heaven and on earth" (85). "Although the humanity is not everywhere, nor is the divinity bound to a certain place, nonetheless the unity of the person remains intact and is not divided" (71–72). To elucidate this point, Vermigli uses the analogy of a jewel attached to a ring. The jewel is always united to the ring, but the jewel need not extend as far as the ring in order to preserve their union. Just as the jewel is not on the inside part of the finger as the ring is, so Christ's humanity does not extend to all the places the divinity fills (31). Yet, his humanity is not torn from union with the divinity as a consequence (32).

On the Lutheran side, Brenz had put forward a different understanding of the hypostatic union. In the *Dialogue*, Pantachus (Brenz) contends that Christ's humanity has the attribute of being everywhere by virtue of its being joined inseparably to the divine nature (21). There is a communication of properties such that wherever the Godhead may be, the humanity is also there (23).²⁵ This stems from Brenz's understanding of the hypostasis as the "mutual fellowship" of the natures, which must

his argument for the locality of Christ's presence in the eucharist. See further Drake, *Flesh of the Word*, 60–61, 81, 98, 171.

24. Cf. Zwingli and Oecolampadius: "God certainly *can* make it possible for one body to be in different places at the same time. We, however, demand proof that He does so in the Lord's Supper." Hermann Sasse, *This Is My Body: Luther's Contention for the Real Presence in the Sacrament of the Altar* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1959), 256.

25. Brenz nuances his position by arguing that the meaning of "nature" is twofold: "the very substance of a thing," and a thing's "properties and accidents." In the first sense, Christ's two natures remain inviolate and unchanged in the person of Christ (*Dialogue*, 39–40, quoting Brenz, *De personalis unione*). In the second sense, however, Christ's human nature does change and can take on the divine attribute of ubiquity since, according to Brenz, being somewhere locally does not belong to the substance of a body but is only an accidental property of the subject. Vermigli rejects Brenz's proposed distinction (40, 73).

include the same *ubi*.²⁶ Vermigli rejects this commingling of the two natures and their properties, warning that Brenz's position is "not far from the error of Eutyches" (23–24). While we may not divide the two natures of Christ, as Nestorius did, neither may we confuse them, as Eutyches did. The two natures are conjoined in the same hypostasis, but "both retain their properties intact and whole" (23). Christ's finite body is not coextensive with the infinite God (79); his humanity cannot fill everywhere any more than the Godhead can be totally enclosed in a limited human body (45–46). We see Vermigli seeking to preserve Chalcedonian Christology through the concept of the *extra* over against the Eutychian leanings of his opponent. Vermigli denies that the human nature was lifted up to infinite power, wisdom, goodness, and justice, reasoning that "what is finite and limited cannot hold the infinite [*quia quod finitum ac terminatum est, infinita non capit*]" (37). This phrase closely resembles the Reformed maxim, *finitum non capax infiniti* (the finite cannot grasp the infinite).²⁷ Vermigli's point is that Christ's human body is incapable of receiving divine properties without ceasing to be what it is because the finite and the infinite are contradictories.

The *Communicatio Idiomatum*

How, then, should we understand the communication of properties (*communicatio idiomatum*)? Vermigli explains, "We must first examine the person about which these statements are made; then we must carefully reflect in our hearts on the two natures and distribute to each the properties that befit each" (74). For example, in 1 Corinthians 2:8, the "Lord of glory" is said to have been crucified. This is said because "the Word of God had united to it that nature that underwent suffering and death on the cross" (74), and not because the eternal Word suffered and died.²⁸ Likewise, it is said that "God redeemed his church in his blood [Eph. 1:7; Acts 20:28] because he assumed the nature from which the blood was shed for all of us" (74). In other words, God the Son died and shed blood according only to his human nature. Vermigli explains, "not all properties are really and indiscriminately communicated to both natures," and "communication more often involves words and terminology than the properties themselves" (75). The Word "calls his own things that belong to

26. Jörg Baur, "Ubiquität," in *Creator est creatura: Luthers Christologie als Lehre von der Idiomenkommunikation*, ed. Oswald Bayer and Benjamin Gleede (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2007), 243, quoted in Drake, *Flesh of the Word*, 176.

27. See Richard A. Muller, *Dictionary of Latin and Greek Theological Terms: Drawn Principally from Protestant Scholastic Theology*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2017), 125–26. On how the *finitum non capax infiniti* principle was brought to bear on the *extra Calvinisticum*, see Davidson, "Christ," 462; Andrew M. McGinnis, *The Son of God Beyond the Flesh: A Historical and Theological Study of the Extra Calvinisticum*, T&T Clark Studies in Systematic Theology 29 (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2014), 86–7.

28. Vermigli cites Cyril of Alexandria who, in his letter to John of Antioch, wrote, "That wise man Peter says as much, 'Christ suffered in the flesh' for us [1 Pet. 4:1]; he did not say, 'in the nature of his ineffable divinity.'" Christ's sufferings belong properly to the flesh and "belong to the Word in the judgment and statement of Scripture, not because the Word Itself really suffered and died" (67).

his flesh,” but certainly not as though they inhere and are received in the divine nature to which they are said to be communicated (81; also 86). The opposite is also true: the divine properties of omnipresence and ubiquity are not received in the human nature (73).

Vermigli’s understanding of the *communicatio idiomatum* differs significantly from that of Brenz—an ontologically real (and not merely verbal) communication of properties—because Vermigli holds to a different conceptualization of the hypostasis. Drake captures the difference succinctly: “For Vermigli the hypostasis is the subject of the union, while for Brenz it is the product of it.”²⁹ Vermigli conceives of Christ’s human nature as enhypostatic; it subsists within the pre-existent hypostasis of the divine eternal Son.³⁰ In other words, the infinite Word, the second person of the Trinity, did not assume a person but a nature—a finite human nature that cannot be mixed with the divine nature. “Vermigli’s doctrine of the *communicatio idiomatum* terminates on the person, which allows for an understanding of Christ such that he can be everywhere according to his divinity and circumscribed according to his humanity simultaneously.”³¹

We see, then, that the *extra* is a corollary of Christ’s enhypostatic human nature. As Drake puts it, “the Word has become flesh, but the flesh has not become the Word.”³² Therefore, the Word maintains his existence beyond the flesh. Vermigli maintains the doctrine of the *extra*—that Christ is both everywhere and in a particular place, according to each nature—because of his enhypostatic Christology and his understanding that the communication of properties terminates on Christ’s person.

The Ascension of Christ

The *extra* plays an essential role in Vermigli’s understanding of the ascension of Christ into heaven. According to Vermigli, the ascension involved a corporeal entrance of Christ’s body into “the most spacious land of the living, which lies beyond all the visible heavens” (13; also 113). Whereas the *Consensus Tigurinus* was unclear regarding the nature of heaven, Vermigli states that heaven is a local realm above the skies.³³ On this, he departs from Aristotle, who taught that no physical body could exist outside the visible heaven. “For philosophers are not to be listened to; rather listen to the Scripture revealed by God’s Word” (117). Citing biblical texts such as Ephesians 4:10, Vermigli argues that the ascended Christ now abides bodily in “those spaces and regions of the living which are beyond the heavens but unknown to the philosophers” (115). That is also where believers already possess their places and mansions and where they will dwell after the final resurrection (Jn. 14:2–3).

29. Drake, *Flesh of the Word*, 181.

30. See also, e.g., Peter Martyr Vermigli, *Life, Letters, and Sermons*, ed. and trans. John Patrick Donnelly, S.J., Peter Martyr Library 5 (Kirkville: Thomas Jefferson University Press, 1999), 206; Klempa, “Classical Christology,” 333.

31. Drake, *Flesh of the Word*, 186.

32. Drake, *Flesh of the Word*, 191.

33. Cf. “Consensus Tigurinus,” in *Reformed Confessions*, 1:545.

In contrast to Brenz, who states that from the moment of incarnation Christ was already in heaven according to his human nature (107, 137), Vermigli holds that Christ entered heaven for the first time at his ascension (108). The ascension pertained only to Christ's humanity: "the divine hypostasis of Christ, which was infinite, could not ascend as regards its nature since it already occupied everything. But the humanity, which has its fixed dimensions, truly ascended into heaven" (111). The language of "ascension" itself proves that Christ was not present in heaven prior to being carried up there; it denotes movement from one place to another. "Nobody goes off to places he already fills" (111). "The divinity is everywhere by its immensity and accordingly can't ascend and descend" (133). Relying on Paul's antithesis between descending and ascending in Ephesians 4:9–10, Vermigli reasons that just as we accept that Christ literally descended to "the lower parts of the earth in which Christ lived for our salvation," so we should accept that he literally ascended to "the places in which Christ is now contained regarding his body up to the time for the restoration of all things" (125).³⁴ To say that Christ is "contained" in a place does not pose a problem for Vermigli's Christology because the doctrine of the *extra* holds that Christ, in his divine nature, transcends all places.

In his treatment of the ascension, Vermigli tackles Brenz's argument that Christ, by his humanity, is seated at the "right hand" of God the Father almighty, which is not a physical place but represents the omnipotence and majesty of God. This reasoning leads Brenz to conclude that Christ's humanity is ubiquitous and immediately present to all things (114–15). Luther also taught that since Christ took his seat at the Father's right hand, his body is everywhere (105). Vermigli posits that God, who is spirit, does not have a bodily right hand, but "in a very elegant turn of phrase he is said to have the man Christ at his right hand because he has adorned him above all other creatures with excellence, honor, and dignity" (118).³⁵ He then argues that even if Brenz's interpretation of "right hand" were correct in saying that Christ's humanity is joined to God's omnipotence and majesty, it would still be the case that Christ's humanity "does not extend as far as they" (118). In support of this, Vermigli offers analogies illustrating that there is no need for us to be coextensive with things to which we are attached. A throne is often much wider and taller than the body of a king seated on it. A cross is much bigger than the thief who is nailed onto it. "So too God's [. . .] omnipotence and majesty [. . .] may be everywhere, but the humanity of Christ which is joined to it remains contained within its own limits" (118). Again, the *extra* comes to the fore in Vermigli's argumentation, enabling him to maintain the integrity of Christ's human nature.

Having demonstrated that Christ remains in heaven according to his humanity, Vermigli affirms that Christ is still present with his people in two ways: first, according to his divinity, and second, through the sending of the Holy Spirit. He is present with us in these ways but is absent according to his humanity, and we await

34. On Vermigli's interpretation of the phrase "that he might fill all things" (Eph. 4:10), see Drake, *Flesh of the Word*, 199–200.

35. Cf. John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1960), 1:524 [2.16.15].

his bodily return (186–87). This leads us, then, to Vermigli’s treatment of Christ’s presence in the Lord’s Supper.

Christ’s Presence in the Lord’s Supper

We see that the *extra* has a practical import when Vermigli comes to his treatment of Christ’s eucharistic presence in topic VI of the *Dialogue*. In defense of a Reformed understanding of the Lord’s Supper, Vermigli asserts that Christ is present in the sacrament not only in his divinity but also in his body and blood by “a presence of faith,” not by a “real, bodily, substantial presence” (140). To join Christ’s body and blood “bodily and substantially” to the bread and wine of the Supper is to pull them down from heaven because they cannot be in many places simultaneously (148). Believers, having been “endowed with twofold mouth,” receive the bread and wine with their “natural mouth,” but “with the mouth of the soul or of faith they take in those things which the Lord signified to them in establishing [the Supper], namely the body and blood of Christ, as they were given for our salvation on the cross.” This eating is not something literal but metaphorical and spiritual; it involves “effectively believing that [the body and blood] were offered for our sake by God unto death on the cross” and inflames our faith more and more (189).

For Vermigli, the Lutheran position is ruled out by the fact that Christ, according to his humanity, exists in heaven and nowhere else until his return. At present, Christ is spatially separated from us. But this does not mean we cannot have true communion with him. When used with faith, the bread and wine of the Supper “make us participate spiritually in the realities they signify.” Spatial or local nearness is not necessary for believers’ spiritual communion with Christ’s body and blood, says Vermigli. Hence, “although Christ’s humanity is located beyond the visible heavens, it can still be joined to us by a life-giving union while we are still living on earth” (192). We are members of his body, and we are flesh of his flesh, bone of his bone, even though at present, Christ and we inhabit different and distant places. Christ does not cease to be joined spiritually to his church by reason of distance, just as a husband does not cease to be one flesh with his wife when separated from her on a trip (192). Yet, we look forward with eagerness to the day of consummation and, in this life, commune with Christ spiritually through the Holy Spirit.

Conclusion

One writer has said, “the aim of the theologian dealing with a mystery is to do away with phrases which diminish the mystery.”³⁶ In Vermigli’s treatment of the two natures of Christ in the *Dialogue*, we see an effort to do away with (in this case, Lutheran) phrases and arguments that diminish the mystery of the hypostatic union. Vermigli preserves the mystery of Scripture’s testimony that the incarnate Son has limits yet is infinite, dwells in one place and yet fills all things, has human flesh and yet exists wholly beyond it.

36. Charles Journet, *The Meaning of Evil* (New York: J. P. Kennedy, 1963), 14.

At the same time, Vermigli maintains that while there is mystery in the Christian faith that cannot be grasped by human reason, there is nevertheless a rationality to the faith. In his argumentation against Brenz, we see what Drake calls “the subordinate yet operative place of reason for theology.”³⁷ Vermigli upholds the finite nature of bodies and, therefore, of Christ’s human body, which necessitates that Christ be and remain spatially circumscribed, even in his state of exaltation. He is truly man, just as he is truly God. Therefore, to hold that Christ has human limitations does not dishonor him. Rather, it does justice to the magnitude of his gracious condescension, for the eternal, infinite Word has assumed a finite human nature in order to become our mediator as the God-man.

37. Drake, *Flesh of the Word*, 174.