

CHAPTER TWENTY

POLITICAL THEOLOGY: THE GODLY PRINCE

Torrance Kirby

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.¹ 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 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.'² 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 Melanchthon's *Common Places* (1559).³ 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,⁴ took Masson's edition as its base with a minor rearrangement of the topics, and included a large

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

² *Loci Communes*, ed. Robert Masson (London: John Kingdon, 1576). See Joseph C. McLelland, 'Peter Martyr's *Loci Communes*: A Literary History' in chapter 23 below.

³ Kingdon, *Political Thought of Peter Martyr*, iii.

⁴ 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.

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 explicitly to an order and arrangement closely analogous to that of Calvin's *Institute of the Christian Religion*.⁵ Vermigli's heavier weighting of selected *topoi* in favour of matters political is arguably attributable to a shift in theological focus at the time of editing, however, and therefore not representative of Vermigli's theological emphasis at all. 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 1572.⁶ 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 agenda. On closer examination of the biblical commentaries themselves, however—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 for 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 political forms of religious persecution.⁷ The experience of fleeing 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 Strasbourg and England, doubtless raised acute questions for Vermigli concerning the relation between religion and political power.⁸

⁵ Robert le Maçon, Sieur de la Fontaine, was formerly minister in Orléans. See McLelland, *Literary History*, 10.

⁶ Robert M. Kingdon, *Myths about the St. Bartholomew's Day massacres, 1572–1576* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1988).

⁷ Josiah Simler, *An Oration of the life and death of that worthie man and excellent Divuine d. Peter Martyr Vermillius, professor of Diuinitie in the Schoole of Zuricke*, in *Another Collection of certeine Diuine matters and doctrines of the same M.D. Peter Martyr*, translated and partlie gathered by Anthonie Marten (London: John Day, 1583). See also the excellent biography by Mark Taplin in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

⁸ 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

In many respects, the content and general formulation of his political ideas is not notably original. Unlike other leading representatives of the Reformed tradition 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 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...’⁹ Consequently in his lectures in the free Imperial city of Strasbourg and in the republic of Canton Zurich, Vermigli’s close attention to political themes acquires added significance. This is especially the case for their subsequent influence on political theology in England. The large proportion of his political writings to the corpus as a whole, his sustained critique of papal claims to jurisdiction (and related questions concerning the right relation between religious and political power), and his decisive emphasis upon monarchical constitutional structures all testify to Vermigli’s substantial contribution to later-sixteenth century English political theology.

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.¹⁰ Vermigli’s lectures on Romans belong to his Oxford period (1547–1553),

to impose a Catholic regime throughout the empire, and so Vermigli gladly accepted Thomas Cranmer’s invitation to take up an appointment at Oxford. Similarly, the demise of Edward VI compelled Vermigli to flee again to the continent and return 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.

⁹ Kingdon, *Political Thought*, iv.

¹⁰ 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 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* (Kirksville, MO: Truman State University Press, 1999), 221–237.

and were published in Basle in 1558, five years after his ejection from the Regius Chair.¹¹ An English translation by ‘H. B.’, most likely Sir Henry Billingsley—a classicist perhaps best known for his translation of Euclid’s *Elements* of 1570—appeared ten years later ‘cum gratia & priuilegio regia’ with a dedication to Sir Anthony Cooke, the evangelical humanist scholar who attended Vermigli’s lectures in Strasbourg as a Marian exile.¹² By far the largest proportion of the political *scholia*, however, derives from Vermigli’s extensive Old Testament commentaries, specifically on the history of ancient Israel in the Books of Judges,¹³ Samuel, and Kings.¹⁴ 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 (1553–1556) following his expulsion from England, while his lectures on Samuel and Kings were delivered at Zurich (1556–1562). 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 too went through several Latin editions and appeared in an anonymous English translation in 1564.¹⁵ There is a lengthy summary of

¹¹ *In Epistolam S. Pauli Apostoli ad Romanos... Commentarii* (Basle: 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 Martir Vermilius Florentine, professor of diuinitie in the schole of Tygure, vpon the Epistle of S. Paul to the Romanes wherin are diligently [and] most profitably entreated all such matters and chiefe common places of religion touched in the same Epistle* (London: John Day, 1568).

¹² See BL Add. MS 29, 549, fols. 16–17, dated 15 October 1558. OL I: 139–140; ZL II:13–14. See Anita McConnell, ‘Billingsley, Sir Henry (d. 1606),’ *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004) [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/2392, accessed 31 Aug 2007].

¹³ 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 Vermilij Florentini... commentarij doctissimi* (Zurich: C. Froschauer, 1561; repr. 1565, 1571, 1582; Republished Heidelberg: J. Lancelot, 1609).

¹⁴ *In Duos Libros Samuelis Prophetarum... 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).

¹⁵ *Most fruitfull & learned cōmentaries of Doctor Peter Martir Vermil Florentine, professor of deuinitie, in the Uniuersitye of Tygure, with a very profitable tract of the matter and places* (London: John Day, [1564]) [hereafter *CJ*]. This edition has prefatory letters of the publisher, John Day, addressed to Robert Dudley, Early of Leicester

the argument of this commentary by Francis, Second Earl of Bedford in a commonplace book in the family archive at Woburn Abbey.¹⁶ 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.¹⁷ Vermigli’s preoccupation with the concrete ethical, political, and historical concerns of ancient Israel in this final, mature phase of his growth as an exegete of the Hebrew Scriptures is surely significant, especially for his preoccupation with 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 his great exegetical odyssey into the history of the emerging kingdom of ancient Israel.¹⁸ Was there any intrinsic connection, then, between his study of Aristotle’s practical philosophy and his exegesis of the political history of Israel?

There is no question that Vermigli’s obviously thorough training in Aristotelian logic and methodology while studying at the University of Padua between 1519 and the mid-1520s influenced him throughout his career.¹⁹ From the late fourteenth century, Padua had been renowned for its strength in the areas of philosophy and law, and in the traditions of Aristotelianism and the canon law in particular.²⁰ Marsilius of Padua, Nicholas of Cusa, Nicolaus Copernicus, Pietro Pompanazzi, and Sir Francis Walsingham were just a few of the distinguished alumni.²¹

and of Vermigli to the ‘scholarchs’ of the Academy at Strasbourg where he delivered the lectures.

¹⁶ ‘The Comentary of Master Peter Martyr upon the Booke of Judges’, *Commonplace Book of Francis, second Earl of Bedford*, Bedford Estate Archive, HMC 10, fols. 20. There are marginal notes on this text in the hand of Francis the fourth Earl (d. 1641).

¹⁷ See CP (1583), Part IV ‘Divine Epistles’, 127–128; 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: A.D. 1533 to A.D. 1588* (London: Bell and Daldy, 1857), 420–422.

¹⁸ *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).

¹⁹ Vermigli received his doctorate from Padua in 1526. See Philip McNair, *Peter Martyr in Italy: an anatomy of apostasy* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967), 116–117.

²⁰ See Jonathan Woolfson, *Padua and the Tudors: English students in Italy, 1485–1603* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998).

²¹ Lucia Rossetti, *The University of Padua: an outline of its history* (Trieste: Edizioni Lint, 1983).

While a student at Padua, Vermigli had contact with the humanist circle of Pietro Bembo and made the acquaintance there of Reginald Pole who thirty years later following the accession of Queen Mary, as a prince of the Church, and at the apogee of both their careers, was to become Vermigli's nemesis in England.²² Vermigli probably acquired the rudiments of the very distinctive hermeneutical method prominent throughout much of his biblical commentary in Padua, namely an etymological approach to interpretation based on the humanistic method of the *trilinguum* combined with scholastic syllogistic argumentation and employing the Aristotelian formulation of definitions based on the classification of the four causes—formal, efficient, material, and final cause.²³ This blending of humanism and scholasticism, combined with a powerful command of Hebrew is the hallmark of his distinctive hermeneutics (equalled in sophistication perhaps only by Hooker in the next generation).

Let us look at this method in action on a question at the heart of sixteenth-century political theology, namely the religious authority of princes and magistrates. This is one subject where Vermigli's judgement played a defining role in both England and Zurich. While Vermigli was composing his lectures on the Book of Judges he had before him one of the most famous and influential of all definitions of the task of political science in the opening chapter of the *Nicomachean Ethics*:

If, then, there is some end of the things we do, which we desire for its own sake (everything else being desired for the sake of this), and if we do not choose everything for the sake of something else (for at that rate the process would go on to infinity, so that our desire would be empty and vain), clearly this must be the good and the chief good. Will not the knowledge of it, then, have a great influence on life? Shall we not, like archers who have a mark to aim at, be more likely to hit upon what is right? If so, we must try, in outline at least, to determine what it is, and of which of the sciences or capacities it is the object. It would seem to

²² On Vermigli's early career in Italy see McNair, *Peter Martyr in Italy*.

²³ See, e.g., his definition of the 'Magistrate' in the Romans Commentary. In *Epistolam S. Pauli Apostoli Ad Romanos D. Petri Martyris Vermilij Florentini, Professoris diuniaru[m] in schola Tigurini, com[m]entarij doctissimi, cum tractatione perutili rerum & locorum, qui ad eam epistolam pertinent* (Basle: Petrus Perna, 1558), fol. 640. For Aristotle's teaching concerning the 'four causes' see *Physics* 2.1 (192b8–193b22) and *Metaphysics* 5.2 (1013a24–1013b28).

belong to the most authoritative art and that which is most truly the master [architectonic] art. And politics appears to be of this nature...²⁴

Aristotle's claim that politics as an architectonic art 'uses the rest of the [practical] sciences' as instruments in order to achieve its 'end' (that is, something to be desired 'for its own sake') provides a useful point of reference for interpreting Vermigli's notable preoccupation with matters ethical, political, and historical at the most mature phase of his exegetical career. Arguably biblical hermeneutics for Vermigli find some sort of completion, fulfilment, actuality—*εντελεχεία*, as Aristotle put it—in his interpretation of the history of Ancient Israel and thus in the exposition of the organisation of practical, social life with the end in view both to know and to achieve the good, analogous to Aristotle's science of politics. In his commentary on the *Ethics* Vermigli observes that 'in philosophy action [πρακτικόν] precedes contemplation [θεωρητικόν] because, as it is said, we can contemplate neither God nor nature by human powers unless our emotions are first at rest, while in Scripture speculation comes first, since we must first believe and be justified through faith. Afterwards, good works follow, which occur more abundantly the more frequently we are renewed by the Holy Spirit.'²⁵ In this regard, Aristotle's approach to the practical is very much at odds with the principles revealed in Scripture. It is important to recognize nonetheless that Vermigli's careful attention to the question of the order of *theoria* and *praxis* lies at the heart of his distinctively 'reformed' variety of scholasticism, and that the general nature of the question is such that Aristotle may be of some positive assistance in the exegetical enterprise. Vermigli interprets the revealed theology of Scripture as an inversion of the received order of action and contemplation classically formulated in the natural theology of the Aristotelian metaphysics; yet both ancient practical philosophy

²⁴ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, translated by Sir W.D. Ross (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1908), Bk.1, cap. 2. The passage continues... 'since politics uses the rest of the sciences, and since, again, it legislates as to what we are to do and what we are to abstain from, the end of this science must include those of the others, so that this end must be the good for man. For even if the end is the same for a single man and for a state, that of the state seems at all events something greater and more complete whether to attain or to preserve; though it is worth while to attain the end merely for one man, it is finer and more godlike to attain it for a nation or for city-states.'

²⁵ Moreover, in his treatment of the topic '*De Naturale Cognitione Dei*' in his *Commentary on Romans* (1:18), Vermigli observes that 'the truth we have by faith is stronger for proceeding to action than the truth perceived by nature.' See *Loci Communes* I.2.

and the revelation of the history of God's ancient elect people present the concreteness of social and ethical life in some fashion synthetic of knowledge and action. This, at least, is the comparison that I would like to pursue in addressing the question of Vermigli's preoccupation with the political history of Israel in his exegetical prime.

McNair and Donnelly, among others, have observed that Vermigli was under the influence of certain aspects of Thomist scholasticism. Indeed, some have suggested that this influence was considerably greater in his case than with almost any of his Reformed contemporaries.²⁶ While it would be fallacious to point to the posthumous construction of the *Loci Communes* as evidence of Vermigli's scholastic bent, he nonetheless employs scholastic sources and logical methods with great frequency.²⁷ Alexandre Ganoczy's examination of the extant portion of Vermigli's personal library now housed at the Genevan Academy has shown that the reformer was familiar with Roman law, perhaps not all that surprising in an epigone of the *Studio* at Padua.²⁸ Kingdon has gone further still in accounting for Vermigli's broad acquaintance with the *Corpus Iuris Canonici*, cited directly in several of his political *scholia*, and frequently used by him as a somewhat less than reliable source of his references to the early Church Fathers.²⁹ Yet, aside from such accidental considerations of sources and methodology, a certain substantively scholastic tendency on Vermigli's part may be detected in the broad implication of his late exegetical endeavours, namely that theology be understood as 'practical science'. Thomas Aquinas argues at the outset of the *Summa Theologiæ* that the science of *sacra doctrina* is simultaneously speculative and practical; it is concerned with both knowing and doing.³⁰ This Thomistic view that the science of theology

²⁶ See Philip McNair, *Peter Martyr in Italy*, chapter 4. John P. Donnelly, *Calvinism and Scholasticism in Vermigli's doctrine of man and grace* (Leiden: Brill, 1976). See also Frank James, '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 (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 1999), 62–78.

²⁷ See McLelland, *Literary History*, 8–10.

²⁸ Alexandre Ganoczy, *La Bibliothèque de l'Académie de Calvin* (Geneva: Droz, 1969), 273. Copies of the *Corpus Iuris Civilis*, the *Codex* and *Digests* all contain marginal annotations in Vermigli's hand. See Kingdon, viii.

²⁹ See Kingdon, *Political Thought*, ix, where he observes that Vermigli employs glosses prepared by anonymous Parisian juriconsults that appear in sixteenth-century editions of the *Corpus Iuris Canonici*, but not in the modern editions.

³⁰ *Summa Theologiae*, 1a, Q. 1, art. 4, *Obj. 1*: It seems that sacred doctrine is a practical science; for a practical science is that which ends in action according to the

embraces theoretical and practical aspects within a single perspective can be discerned in Vermigli's theological approach to the phenomena of 'human acts', viz. government, constitutionality, and history in his exegesis of Judges, Samuel, and Kings. As with Aquinas's sacred science, Vermigli's exegesis is concerned simultaneously with both the practical and the theoretical, that is to say, with knowledge of right action, and even more importantly with right knowledge of God as the foundation of right action.

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 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.³¹ "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 aunswered them: I will not raygne over you, neither shall my child reigne over you, the Lord shal raigne over you."³² 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 the exegesis, the question is whether the law of God or the law of men will rule, and thus whether the divine sovereignty is duly recognized. Unlike the nations, it was the case with the tribe of Israel that 'the right to

Philosopher (Metaph. ii). But sacred doctrine is ordained to action: 'Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only' (James 1:22).

Obj. 2 Further, sacred doctrine is divided into the Old and the New Law. But law implies a moral science which is a practical science. Therefore sacred doctrine is a practical science.

Respondeo. Sacred doctrine, being one, extends to things which belong to different philosophical sciences because it considers in each the same formal aspect, namely, so far as they can be known through divine revelation. Hence, although among the philosophical sciences one is speculative and another practical, nevertheless sacred doctrine includes both; as God, by one and the same science, knows both Himself and His works. Still, it is speculative rather than practical because it is more concerned with divine things than with human acts; though it does treat even of these latter, inasmuch as man is ordained by them to the perfect knowledge of God in which consists eternal bliss. This is a sufficient answer to the Objections.

³¹ *CJ* fols. 147 r°–150r°.

³² Judges 8:22, 23. *CJ* fol. 147 r°.

appointe a king, belonged to god, and not unto men.³³ 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 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.'³⁴ By their refusal 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, and the comparison holds. 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 publike wealthe: but because he understode that it was no lawful 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) bear rule over theyr subjectes: but ye shal not do so... This is to govern the church, not to command, but to serve.³⁵

Unlike 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.

The *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 recognize the rightful source of ecclesiastical power in the divine

³³ *CJ* fol. 147 r°. 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 kinges, but almost all the Judge were good and godly. Yet the kinges 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, fol. 2.

³⁴ *CJ* fol. 147 r°.

³⁵ *CJ* fol. 148 r°; Kingdon, 19.

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.’³⁶ This is a radical claim on Vermigli’s part. It is not simply doctrinal error—e.g., 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 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, ‘supream power and kingdome in the church was in a manner offred... which they like Gideon refused with a greate spirite and singular modesty.’³⁷ Gregory deplored the pretension of John of Constantinople to the title of ‘universall Patriarch’, and he maintained that such a title impinged upon the dignity of the Emperor.³⁸ Vermigli is not persuaded, however, by Gregory’s claim it was this John ‘who did

³⁶ *CJ* fol. 148 v^o; Kingdon, 19.

³⁷ *CJ* fol. 148 r^o; Kingdon, 16.

³⁸ ‘But oure men now a dayes thinke it necessaraye 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.

first usurpe unto himself the title of universality.³⁹ The reformer cites one of his favourite authorities, Theodoret, who refers to Nestorius as by the name of ‘universall patriarke.’⁴⁰ 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.’⁴¹ 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 Constantinus Augustus.⁴² In this respect Vermigli’s approach to the imperial office is thoroughly consistent with the standard contemporary Tudor apologies for the Royal Supremacy.⁴³ In a formulation that would sit well both in England and Zurich, Vermigli argues that ‘Kinges and magistrates when they are godlye, in my judgemente oughte to have the chiefe place in the church: and to them it pertaineth, if religion be il administred, to correcte the defaultes. For therefore they beare the sword to maintayne Gods honor.’⁴⁴ 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.’⁴⁵

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

³⁹ 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. *Novellæ 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 ‘Novellæ’, quoted here. See Gregory the Great, *Epistles*, lib. V, ind. xii, nos. 18; PL 77.740. Kingdon, 18.

⁴⁰ Theodoret, *Haereticarum Fabularum Compendium*, IV.12, ‘De Nestorio,’ PG 83.1156.

⁴¹ 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 77.745–746. Kingdon, 17.

⁴² ‘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, 246–248.

⁴³ See chapter two, ‘The Godly Prince,’ in W.J. Torrance Kirby, *The Zurich Connection and Tudor Political Theology* (Leiden and Boston: E.J. Brill, 2007), 59–74.

⁴⁴ Kingdon, 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), 131–145.

⁴⁵ Gregory the Great, *Epistles*, lib. V, ind. xii, nos. 18, 20, and 43; PL 77.740, 747, 771.

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.’⁴⁶ 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.’⁴⁷ 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 al evils and superstitions.’⁴⁸ Disorder in the sphere of the practical breeds confusion concerning first principles. ‘Wherefore if [the universal patricarchy] 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 example of Gideon, Leo, and Gregory have bene refused.’⁴⁹ 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 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 Presidentes 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

⁴⁶ *CJ* fol. 148 v^o; Kingdon, 20.

⁴⁷ Eph. 1:22. See *CJ* fol. 148 v^o; Kingdon, 20.

⁴⁸ *CJ* fol. 148 v^o; Kingdon, 19.

⁴⁹ *CJ* fol. 148 r^o; Kingdon, 19.

civic dignity within the Empire that ‘the bishop of Rome began to be preferred above other.’⁵⁰

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 Pernicyous Doctryn 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.⁵¹ 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 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.⁵² According to Vermigli, Fisher falls into the ‘false Sillogismus

⁵⁰ *CJ* fol. 148 v^o; Kingdon, 20.

⁵¹ John Fisher, *The sermon of Ioh[a]n the bysshop of Rochester made agayn the p[er]nicious doctryn of Martin luther: w[i]t[h]in the octaues of the asce[n]syon by the assigneme[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]).

⁵² 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*, edited by Cecilia A. Hatt (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 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, Chryst, 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 withstandynge she hathe an heed of hyr owne to gouerne hyr accordynge to the wyl and pleasure of hyr housband, yet she hath hyr housband to be hyr heed and Chryst to be hyr heed, and God to be hyr heed: how moche rather our mother holy chirche, which is the spowse of Christ, hath an heed of her owne, that is to say, the pope. And yet neuerthelesse Chryst Iesu hyr housbande is her heed, and almyghty God is hyr heed also. But now let vs retourne to our instruccyon. Thus than ye vnderstande how that in the vnyuersal chirche of Chryste remayneth the spyryte of trouthe for [sig. [B]iv]* euer. And that the heed of this chirche, the pope, is vnder Chryst. Bi this breuely it may appeere that the spyryte of Christ is not in Martyn Luther.’

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 Church to have two Metaphorical, that is spiritual heads.'⁵³ 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?⁵⁴ Vermigli traces the crucial origins of papal tyranny back to the middle of the 8th century, specifically to the notorious 'False Decretals' of Pseudo-Isidore, known as Isidore Mercator.⁵⁵ 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.⁵⁶ Nicholas of Cusa was

⁵³ *CJ* fol. 149 r^o; Kingdon, 21.

⁵⁴ 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, fols. 229–231 and IV.13.14, fol. 233. See Kirby, *Zurich Connection*, 59–74.

⁵⁵ The *Clementine Epistles* are included among 58 out of 60 apocryphal letters or decrees attributed to the popes from St. Clement (88–97) to Melchiades (311–314) 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), xxii. Cf. also William Shafer, *Codices pseudo-Isidoriani: a palaeographico-historical study, Monumenta iuris canonici*, Series C: Subsidia vol. 3 (New York: Fordham University Press, 1971).

⁵⁶ With the possible exception of Hincmar in the 9th century and the guarded expression of the Synod of Gerstungen, no one raised his voice against the forgeries till the

among the first to raise serious and specific doubts concerning their authenticity.⁵⁷ 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.⁵⁸ The publisher, Thomas Godfray, also printed Marshall's English translation of Lorenzo Valla's famous refutation of the authenticity of the 'Donation of Constantine'.⁵⁹ Following the lead of Cusanus, Valla, Marshall and several others, Vermigli dismisses the entire edifice of the traditional arguments in support of the papal claim to *plenitudo potestatis* as grounded upon the Pseudo-Isidorian forgeries.⁶⁰ 'Our adversaries,' he says, 'bring the Epistle of Clemens, which is a fained Epistle, as a thing certaine.'⁶¹ 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

fifteenth century. See Philip Schaff, *The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge*, Vol. IX (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1953), 347.

⁵⁷ Nicholas of Cusa, *De Concordantia Catholica*, Bk. III, chap. 2, ss. 309–312; see *The Catholic Concordance*, ed. and transl. Paul Sigmund (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 221–222. Cusanus also debunks 'Donation of Constantine': *De Concordantia*, III.2.294–308 (Sigmund, 216ff.).

⁵⁸ Marsilius of Padua, *The defence of peace: lately translated out of laten in to englysshe, with the kynges moste gracyous priuilege* (London: Robert Wyer, 1535). Although completed in 1324 and circulated in manuscript, the original Latin text was not printed until 1522 in the Basle edition by Beatus Bildius. *Opus insigne cui titulum fecit autor [Marsilius] Defensorem pacis*, (Basle, 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,' *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 6.1 (1990): 89–119.

⁵⁹ 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 vnto Syluester pope of Rhome, by Constantyne emperour of Rome* (London: Thomas Godfray, 1534).

⁶⁰ Although attacked relentlessly throughout the sixteenth century by 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 nouis, & appendice Pauli Lan-celoti Perusini adauctum* (Paris: [s.n.], 1587). The coup de grace was finally delivered by David Blondel in his *Pseudo-Isidorus et Turrianus Vapulantes: seu Editio et censura noua epistolarum omnium: quas piissimis vrbis Romae Praesulibus à B. Clemente ad Siricium &c.* (Geneva: Petri Chouët, 1628).

⁶¹ CJ fol. 149 v°; Kingdon, 22.

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.'⁶² Even a literal reading of the forged Decretals 'maketh verye muche agaynste those, which have unto the Churches obruded 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 thinges have I rehearsed, onely that we might understand, howe much Gideon is to be preferred before the Antechristes of Rome.'⁶³

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 recognize that fully 58 out of 60 apocryphal letters or decrees attributed to bishops of Rome between the apostolic period and the conversion of Constantine, i.e. from Clement I (88–97) to Melchiades (311–314), 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.⁶⁴

⁶² Clement of Rome, *Opera dubia, epist. Decretales*, I, ad Jacobum fratrem Domini, PG 1:463.

⁶³ *CJ* fol. 149 v^o; Kingdon, 22.

⁶⁴ Davenport, *False Decretals*, xxii.

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 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.⁶⁵ 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.'⁶⁶ 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 Aristocratia, or of a kingdome, is geven unto a man?'⁶⁷ 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

⁶⁵ *CJ* fol. 147 r^o; Kingdon, 16.

⁶⁶ Matt. 4:8–10; Luke 4:5–8.

⁶⁷ *CJ* fol. 149 v^o; Kingdon, 22.

Vicar and Minister. And assuredly God raignd 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.⁶⁸ 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 ‘Antechriste’. Once again Vermigli quotes Gregory against the canon lawyers: ‘Wherefore let not our men mervayle, if we sometime cal the bishop of Rome Antechrist, for asmuch as their Gregory, calledth him by that most goodly title, which wilbe universal bishop.’⁶⁹

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. Quite 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 the forme of the publike wealth could not be men be changed, without great offence.’⁷⁰ 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, for the synnes of the people,

⁶⁸ *CJ* fol. 149 v^o; Kingdon, 23.

⁶⁹ *CJ* fol. 147 v^o; Kingdon, 17.

⁷⁰ *CJ* fol. 149 v^o; Kingdon, 23.

he maketh an hypocrite to raygne, and in his fury he geveth kinges.⁷¹ When princes are corrupt they must be obeyed ‘*usque ad aras*’—that is, ‘so farre as religion suffreth.’⁷² And may subjects or ‘private men’ take it upon themselves to resist a tyrant and 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 thinges should not be changed.’⁷³

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 Anti-Christ. ‘If so be thou wilt demaund, 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.’⁷⁴ 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 recognizes 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.⁷⁵ 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,

⁷¹ *CJ* fol. 150 r°; Kingdon, 23. See Vermigli’s *scholium* on 2 Sam. 3, ‘Of Warre’, *CP* 4.17, fol. 282. For Augustine, war is frequently the ‘remedy for sin’ in human history. *De civitate Dei* XIX.12, 27.

⁷² *CJ* fol. 150 r°; Kingdon, 23.

⁷³ Macrobius, *Saturnalia*, II.4.18. *Macrobij Ambrosij Theodosij, uiri consularis & illustris, In Somnium Scipionis lib. II. Saturnaliorum lib. VII* (Lyon: Sebastian Gryphius, 1542). *CJ* fol. 150 r°; Kingdon, 24.

⁷⁴ *CJ* fol. 149 v°; Kingdon, 23.

⁷⁵ Aristotle, *Ethics* I.2 (1094a17–1094b10) According to Aristotle, the art (*techne*) which aims at the highest good ‘is most truly the architectonic art.’

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, of[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.*⁷⁶

⁷⁶ Richard Hooker, *Of the Lawes of Ecclesiastical Politie*, The Folger Library Edition of the Works of Richard Hooker, vol. 2, ed. W. Speed Hill (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1977), V.Ded.10; 5:7.21–28.