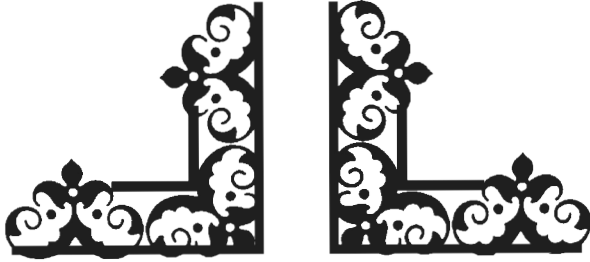


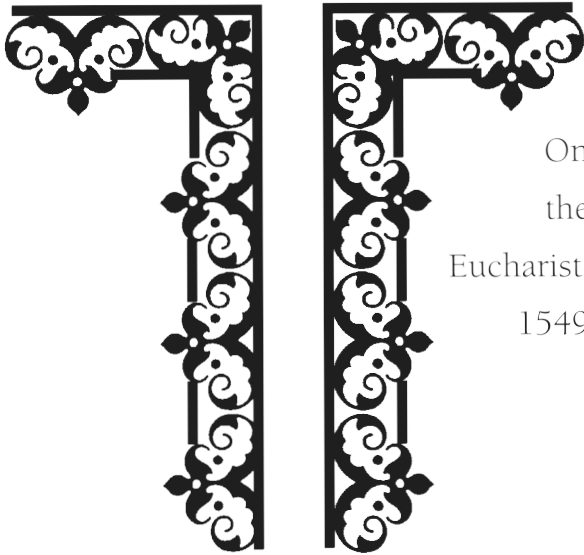
The Peter Martyr Library
Volume Seven
The
Oxford Treatise and
Disputation on the
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On
the
Eucharist,
1549

Peter Martyr Vermigli

Translated and Edited with Introduction and Notes
by Joseph C. McLelland

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Peter Martyr's Prefaces

TO THE CHRISTIAN READER

TWO REASONS HAVE MOVED ME TO WRITE about the Eucharist: the slanders of evil men and the desires of my friends. To slight the one would be a matter of discourtesy, to neglect the other a lack of faith, since it is clear that no small hindrance to the religion of God hangs on it. If my own cause alone were under discussion, I would easily have ignored it, because I do not count my own judgment so great as to think I should be moved by the slanders of adversaries and the empty rumors of enemies. I know it is the part of wisdom to ignore many things, especially of this sort, and I know that Christian charity endures all things, that it seeks not its own but the things that are of Jesus Christ.¹ But it is Christ's cause and not my own that is present here; not my name but the Word of God is being mocked. For the authority of the ministry is so joined to the Word of God that the danger extends to it also. We see how good and godly affairs, no matter how faithfully and wisely handled, proceed with little or no fruit if the one who treats them lacks authority, particularly if he is marred or disgraced by some reproach.

I will not speak of what their insolence has circulated about the disputation I had at Oxford last summer, and how they slandered me to all sorts of men—princes, nobles, commoners, in city and country. For they have done nothing in secret, but every corner, street, house, shop, and tavern still resounds with their lies and boastings and conquests. Nor do I doubt that these evil reports have even reached other lands.² Here then was one reason to encourage me to set forth these disputations. Another, as I said at the beginning, is the requests of friends, which I have denied until now. This was as much because I knew there were enough books available on the matter to instruct every devout person sufficiently, as because no one knows my own actions better than myself. I judge them in such a way that I would not have them

¹1 Cor. 13:5, 7.

²Those who influenced "other lands" include William Tresham, through his account of the Disputation, and Richard Smith in person; see "Response and Critique," (introduction, p. xxx above).

prevent you (dear reader) from reading better books. But now these friends of mine are greatly disturbed by the false reports of wicked men, and have urged me so much that I yielded at last, acceding to the requests of some and being compelled by the authority of others. What could I refuse the most reverend archbishop of Canterbury, to whom I owe most of all? Or the king's visitors, who not only were present at these disputations but also presided?³

Therefore I deliver this *Disputation* to you, along with a *Treatise* on the same matter for its clearer explanation. I have written them all in simple terms, and without style as it were, but faithfully. As to the *Disputation*, I compared my own with the examples of the opponent.⁴ After reading them diligently, I saw that important items had been omitted, and tried to restore them from their writings, within the limits of truth. On other points I saw that they had expanded their arguments and had handled them more precisely in writing than when speaking during the discussion; therefore I also expounded at greater length, though retaining the truth of the matter—but this seldom happened.

So far as I know, I have not changed anything that might wrong those who debated with me as to the effect, the chief points and substance of the arguments, and the rebuttals or answers. Indeed as often as I could, I made sure that the same words are set down that were used by either side when we debated, so far as my memory serves me or the notes of recorders gave me to understand.⁵ Whoever was present at our disputation will see for himself that no argument is omitted or added, and will understand that nowhere have I shied away from the sum and sense of what was said. If those who are contrary by nature complain that I have omitted or twisted anything, let them put it in writing and not deal with me by words which are worthless when spent so freely. Let them act through written reasons, which one may both read and ponder, so that this kind of debate will not be fruitless. For as Homer said, words are only wind; but what is put in writing cannot be so easily misrepresented.⁶ If they do so, I shall prepare myself to answer their writing, just as I was once bold in meeting them with living voice.

Meanwhile, farewell, and take this in good part.

³See introduction, n. 49, for the royal visitors.

⁴Both Tresham and Chedsey published accounts: see introduction, above.

⁵John Jewel was Martyr's notary.

⁶A variant of the Latin saying "Verba volant, scripta manent," probably not Homeric in origin.

Dedication to Thomas Cranmer⁷

PETER MARTYR VERMIGLI, FLORENTINE, PROFESSOR OF THEOLOGY, sends greetings to the Reverend Lord, Dr. Thomas Cranmer, Archbishop of Canterbury, Primate of all England, and his most respected Lord.

Esteemed prelate, those who publish books are accustomed by a public and very ancient practice to choose for themselves leading men in the state, to whose distinguished and famous names they dedicate their books; by that act they gain some remuneration and much profit. First (in their judgment), they gain for themselves a solid and strong defender against detractors and flatterers. Second, since they seek to have those of that rank confer many benefits on them, they try to declare by this sort of service (since they cannot do otherwise) what a warm and caring heart they have toward them. Besides, in the letter which they call a letter of dedication they usually celebrate not only their book's patron by heaping up his praises, but as far as possible also explain clearly the argument they have undertaken to deal with and show its dignity and usefulness. Likewise, they insert some things which they think will help clarify and greatly commend it, so that it may be read more avidly by those who desire sound teaching, and that the less learned may understand more easily what is going to be said. Those who publish books, I admit, can dedicate them to powerful and famous men for many other reasons beyond these, but I have reviewed the more honorable ones and those which should move me so that I might offer this book of mine, such as it is, to your most reverend dignity.

Who else could I have chosen beside yourself as my protector of the gospel truth and this sacrament of the Eucharist? Who is more holy and learned, more steadfast than you? Surely no one. In the patron of any cause what is needed above all is that he has both carefully studied and specially examined the matter he has undertaken to defend. How can anyone defend what he knows [*aij-v*] very little about? Secondly, skill, industry and a plan of action are required; without these we are sometimes likely to fail even in the best causes. Finally, the

⁷Fol. *aij-r*; LC and CP omit the first pages (which are no doubt excessive in their praise) and begin at the middle of *aiii-v*: "I have decided..."; see 9 below. The also omit the final paragraph.

situation demands that the patron have both complete faith in and a special commitment to the things for whose defense he provides a refuge. Sometimes we never carry to a happy conclusion what we undertake with either diffidence or a faint heart. But I know for certain that Your Excellency has such great expertise in this controversy that it would be difficult for anyone to find its equal in any other person. Indeed, there is not one of the Fathers that you have not carefully examined. There is no book by an author old or new in which with these eyes of mine I have not seen annotations in your own hand about all that pertains to this whole disputation. You yourself with intense labor have digested under the main headings the councils, canons, and papal decrees which pertain to this question so that, unless I had witnessed these things with my own eyes, I would never have given a ready belief to other people who related this.⁸

You have committed this sort of work, devotion, and labor not just to this question of the Eucharist; I have observed that you have also done the same regarding almost all other doctrines most subject to controversy in this age of ours. For this reason I need not have shown this little book of mine to you so that you might learn something new from it (since I rather have drawn the greater part of my teaching from your labors); rather, the only reason I send this writing of mine to Your Excellency is so that by your critique [censura] (for you are legally and rightly primate of all England) you might determine and note down in it whatever is seen to have dissented from a right and orthodox meaning. Also that you might protect, guard, and defend with your authority (which is such that it ought to enjoy the highest position) those things which you will have judged to be in accord with the divine letters and to agree well with the edicts of His Royal Majesty.⁹

I pass over in silence many reasons for which I needed a patronage as great as yours in this cause. You therefore have a good hold on the business, as I said. Your Excellency does not fall short of skill, planning, and industry in protecting what you have embraced. From this we can learn that most often, when harassed by adversaries both publicly and privately, you secured freedom from the thorny and intricate quibbles of the sophists for what you knew to be true through the marvelous

⁸On first arriving at Lambeth, Martyr had seen Cranmer's personal florilegium *De Re Sacramentaria*; see CRA, 2:291, and "Response and Critique," xxx above.

⁹See introduction, n. 34, above, for the matter of royal permission for public discussion of the Eucharist.

force of your learning, the sharpness of your talent and your dexterity of action. All godly persons know quite well that there is no lack of will—indeed you have a soul most attentive to defending sound and Christian doctrines. They have seen how you are aflame with such [*aiiii-r*] zeal for establishing religion that you have incurred most bitter hostilities for this reason alone, and have passed by many pleasures of this life and undergone severe dangers.

Indeed, when I considered these things within myself and saw that I have performed some works of very strong defense,¹⁰ I sought refuge in the authority of your name, under which I might be protected from those who seem never to make an end of pulling down, lacerating, and mocking my name everywhere with impudent lies. Never would I have thought (unless I had been caught in the act) that there would be some people who would be so enraged¹¹ and proceed with such sly tricks, deceitful arts, and bitter whips against a man who had merited no harm from them and who had injured none of them by word or deed. But let the cursed tongue of those rascals look out for itself because (as is said in the Psalms) the arrows of the warrior have been prepared against her, with glowing coals from the juniper tree.¹² For just as the poisonous tongue bitterly scourges the innocent, so at last will the tongue of divine judgment dig deep and tear apart and wound with its sharp points. Just as the tongue tries to inflame everything and set afire with its painful words, so in the end it will be burnt in eternal flames.

Thus, eminent prelate, you have the reason that first moved me to decide to dedicate this slender writing of mine to Your Excellency. Therefore I now bring forward another reason for this decision of mine: Just as others (as I said at the outset) are led to dedicate their books to outstanding men, so I have been persuaded to offer this work of mine to you. For such are the kindness and humanity, the merits and generosity with which you have treated me that if I wished to give proper thanks for them and extol them as they deserve, I would have nothing else to say. However much I should proclaim them, the greatness of the subject would always surpass my eloquence. Therefore I decided it was better to say nothing rather than something unworthy and feeble. Everybody already knows how kindly you welcomed not just me but

¹⁰*Hyperaspisou*, as corrected in ERR.

¹¹Reading *saevirent* for *sevirent*.

¹²Ps. 120:4.

many other foreigners of my sort, and treated those you received as warmly as possible.

I therefore cease treating these subjects any further, since they are well known. I know very well that my testimony about your piety, prudence, trustworthiness, and lofty virtues is not being waited for in this kingdom since they are all well attested to everybody. Plato said about Isocrates “He is someone to whom an understanding of philosophy is present by nature.”¹³ He thus indicated that the philosophy of Isocrates (which was usually acquired by teaching and study) came forth from nature. I then recognized that Your Excellency has been so adorned by both grace and the favor of Christ that, although we are all by nature [aiii-v] sons of wrath like everyone else, still your piety, theology, and the rest of your virtues can seem to be inborn naturally and ingrafted, so deep are the roots they have sunk into your soul. Hence often have I hoped and yearned for God to give me as great a benefit, so that as much as I possess might have a grateful heart toward Your Excellency, and that I might be able to progress as closely as possible to your virtues (which I admire in you as gifts from God).

No more on these things, even though my will is reluctantly torn from this and the dignity of subject calls my pen back to it with great force.¹⁴ But it is better to spare your ears than to pursue these words with which I am almost forced to keep on extolling your praises. I know that you can find nothing so hard to bear as hearing about your gifts and virtues. Therefore, because I will be more safely engaged, I will go over with you somewhat more at length in a future place the argument which I have undertaken to treat. There it will be less dangerous, lest I give you offense, even though I know that I should always use brevity with Your Excellency in order to take account of the many and various tasks, as regards both the state and the church, by which you are preoccupied.

I have decided to explain certain matters in a few words,¹⁵ lest by keeping silent I might be held unwise, an innovator, a bold, rash and ungodly man; as though I robbed the sacrament of the Eucharist of its

¹³The quotation is in the original Greek, from *Phaedrus* 279a–b. Jowett has: “For he has an element of philosophy in his nature”; *Dialogues of Plato*, trans. B. Jowett (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1924) 1.489.

¹⁴Reading revocet for reuccet.

¹⁵Both R. Masson and A. Marten, editors of the commonplace books (LC and CP), begin at this point.

honor and dignity, or thrust the holy Supper on the church without Christ, or encouraged such other things as tend to impiety and the neglect of religion. I should rather die, or be nothing at all, or suffer the greatest grief, than disseminate such doctrine. For my part, I attribute so much to this sacrament as to say that through its use the faithful obtain the greatest benefits to be hoped for from God in this life, if they themselves are not hindered through vice or faithlessness.

I hold that all people earnestly desire three sorts of good. First, to continue their life received at birth as long as possible. Second, they wish God to be reconciled to them, and gracious. For the wise live most miserably, knowing that they are never faultless, and that by divine justice a certain punishment is due for every fault, unless they have a sure expiation to hand. Last, the prudent wish to live with one another in justice and goodwill, in happiness and peace; for without these we live most miserably and unhappily. Such are in substance the things universally desired by all who act wisely. And the chief and principal point of these three is, that life may be sustained a long span of time, [*aiv-r*] which we obtain by a beneficial and wholesome kind of diet. We have this most clearly in the holy Supper. Just as the bread and wine (which feed the body) are given outwardly to the communicants, so is it truly granted to their minds that by faith they eat the body and blood of Christ, given for our redemption, so that the whole person, both inward and outward, is restored to the greatest happiness. This is the only way that Scripture allows and knows of eating the body and drinking the blood of the Lord, namely when we apprehend by a constant and firm faith that Jesus the Son of God our Savior and Lord gave his own body on the cross and shed his blood for us, and that he has so embraced us who are given to him by the Father, and so joined and incorporated us to himself, that he is our head, and we flesh of his flesh and bone of his bones, while he dwells in us and we in him. In this stands the whole power and reason of this meat and drink, to which our faith is stirred up and kindled by the threefold Word: sometimes inwardly, while the Holy Spirit, by his secret yet mighty power, clearly incites our souls to renew these things in ourselves, that they may be embraced with lively and willing faith; to the same end we are often moved by the help of God's words, piercing us by outward sound or by writing; and finally, to provide every help for our infirmity, Christ added bread and wine in the Supper as signs. By his words and institution they become sacraments, that is instruments by which the Holy