

Peter Martyr Vermigli on Union with Christ

W. Duncan Rankin*

* Dr. Rankin studied at Clemson University, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Covenant Theological Seminary, Reformed Theological Seminary, and New College, Edinburgh. He taught systematic theology at Reformed Theological Seminary in Jackson, Mississippi, for ten years. At present, he combines pastoring Covenant Presbyterian Church (PCA), in Oak Ridge, Tennessee, with being an Adjunct Professor of Theology at RTS. His Ph.D. dissertation was “Carnal Union with Christ in the Theology of T. F. Torrance.”

The two quotations immediately below from the Reformer Peter Martyr Vermigli reveal that, through their correspondence, there was an ongoing exchange of ideas between the Genevan Reformers and Peter Martyr Vermigli. This relationship has given an importance to Vermigli’s thought, as some Barthian scholars have sought to use his views to bolster their interpretation of Calvin’s doctrine of union with Christ. In this valuable contribution to the debate, Dr. Rankin lets Vermigli speak for himself and then challenges the assertions of those scholars who have sought to over-emphasise the place of “incarnational” union with Christ in his theology.

“But unless some other kind of communion were offered us, this would be very general and feeble; for the whole human race do already hold in this wise communion with Christ. They are in fact men, as He was...”¹ Peter Martyr Vermigli, “Martyr to Calvin, Strasburgh, March 8, 1555,” in *Gleanings of a Few Scattered Ears*, 342.

¹ Peter Martyr Vermigli, “Martyr to Calvin, Strasburgh, March 8, 1555,” in *Gleanings of a Few Scattered Ears*, ed. Gorham, G. C. (London: Bell and Daldy, 1857), 342.

“Somewhat is the conjuncture of one and the same matter which we have in common with Christ from his incarnation.... Yet nevertheless it is not proper to Christians, for the Turks and Jews, and as many as be comprehended among the number of men, are in this way joined in Christ.”² Peter Martyr Vermigli, “Letter to Theodore Beza,” in *Common Places of the most famous and renowned Divine Doctor Peter Martyr, divided into foure principall parts*, Appendix, 105.

What is the doctrine of union with Christ, according to Italian Reformer Peter Martyr Vermigli (1500-1562)?³

Martyr’s Letters to Calvin and Beza

In his letters to John Calvin and Theodore Beza dated 8 March 1555, Peter Martyr treats union with Christ under three distinct headings: natural, spiritual, and mystical. Midway through his letter to Calvin, Martyr summarizes:

We have then here, thus far, two communions with Christ. One is natural, ...the other is effected by the Spirit of Christ.... But I think that between these there is an intermediate one, which is the fount and origin of all the

² Peter Martyr Vermigli, “Letter to Theodore Beza” in *Common Places of the most famous and renowned Divine Doctor Peter Martyr, divided into foure principall parts*, Appendix, trans. Anthony Marten (London: H. Denham and H. Middleton, 1583), 105.

³ A brief synopsis of Martyr’s life is as follows:

Peter Martyr (1500-1562) was born in Florence, Italy, the son of a Savonarola sympathizer, and studied eight years at the University of Padua. He was to become an abbot of the Augustinians and then a prior. It appears that Martin Bucer’s commentaries and the writings of Hulrich Zwingli made a deep impression upon him. Eventually he was forced to leave Italy and seek refuge in Zürich before becoming Professor of Theology in Strasbourg (1542), where he also married a former nun. In 1547 he went to Oxford, and following Mary’s accession to the throne, he was imprisoned. Six months later he was allowed to return to Strasbourg and then back to Zürich. An accessible text on his writings is *The Peter Martyr Reader*, eds. John Patrick Donnelly, Frank A. James, III, and Joseph C. McLelland (Kirksville, MO: Truman State University Press, 1999).

celestial and spiritual likeness which we obtain, together with Christ.⁴

After treating the third kind of communion with Christ, Martyr then consolidates his position: “These communions with Christ I acknowledge, but others (to say the truth) I do not understand.”⁵ Each of these three degrees will now be treated in more detail under separate headings.

Natural Communion with Christ

The first degree of communion with Christ is an implication of the incarnation. Quoting Hebrews 2:14, Peter Martyr explains to Calvin:

And, firstly, it seems to me, that He was pleased (as is said in the Epistle to the Hebrews) to communicate with us, in flesh and blood, by the benefit of His Incarnation.⁶

How does Martyr conceive of this incarnational communion occurring? His line of argument in the letter to Calvin is decidedly biological and genetic, pointing to our parents as the source of this communion. It is “natural, which we derive through our origin from our parents.”⁷ Martyr then reiterates this biological theme to Calvin: “...in corporal flesh and blood they had from their very birth a natural fellowship with Him.”⁸



Woodcut of Peter Martyr

⁴ Martyr to Calvin, 343.

⁵ Martyr to Calvin, 343-344. To Beza, he recaps: “You see therefore what my judgement is on this matter. I believe that there are three degrees of our communion with Christ . . .” Martyr to Beza, 106.

⁶ Martyr to Calvin, 342.

⁷ Martyr to Calvin, 343.

⁸ Martyr to Calvin, 343. Peter Martyr Vermigli, *Loci Communes Petri Martyris Vermiglii Florentini Theologi Celeberrimi* (hereafter, *LC*) (Geneva: Pierre Aubert, 1627), 768: “... *quam corpore, carne ac sanguine cum eo jam ab ipsa nativitate naturaliter communicaverint.*” Martyr repeatedly uses “natural,” not “incarnational,” to describe this communion.

In his letter to Beza, Martyr duplicates his biological argument:

Somewhat is the conjuncture of one and the same matter which we have in common with Christ from his incarnation.⁹

He concludes, “Then do we begin after some sort to be like unto him when we be born men....”¹⁰

We have seen that Martyr qualifies this natural communion with Christ with the terms “somewhat” and “after some sort.” His qualifications do not end there, however. In his letter to Calvin, he concludes his treatment of natural communion with a candid appraisal:

But unless some other kind of communion were offered us, this would be very general and feeble; for the whole human race do already hold in this wise communion with Christ. They are in fact men, as He was....¹¹

Martyr's discounting of incarnational communion as unexceptional is echoed in more specific terms to Beza:

Somewhat is the conjuncture of one and the same matter which we have in common with Christ from his incarnation.... Yet nevertheless it is not proper to Christians,

⁹ Martyr to Beza, 105. *LC*, 777: “*Conjunctio ejusdem naturae, quam cum Christo ab ejus incarnatione communem habemus....*” Note that Gorham’s translation of *naturae* should perhaps read “nature,” rather than “matter.” Martyr also here cites Hebrews 2:14. He later designates our human nature as that “which by the benefit of the first creation was all in one nature with that which Christ in his birth took of the Virgin” Martyr to Beza, 105.

¹⁰ Martyr to Beza, 105. Martyr gives no explanation for natural communion that would not also apply to the relationship between any two other human beings.

¹¹ Martyr to Calvin, 342. Gorham’s translation continues this last sentence: “They are in fact men, as He was *man*.” The final word “man” is, however, editorial embellishment and potentially misleading. The Latin reads: “*Verum, nisi aliud communionis genus intercederet, communis admodum haec esset & debilis. Nam quotquot humana specie comprehenduntur, hac ratione jam cum Christo communicant: sunt quippe homines, ut ipse fuit.*” *LC* 768.

for the Turks and Jews, and as many as be comprehended among the number of men, are in this way joined in Christ.¹²



Theodore Beza

Thus, in his 8 March, 1555, letters to Calvin and Beza, Martyr plainly acknowledges a relationship that Christ has with all men by virtue of his human nature. This he takes as the starting point of his doctrine of union with Christ, although he says it is little more than that. By studying non-Christians in the world around him, Martyr reasons that the effect of this natural, biological correspondence is rather limited. In isolation, it is a completely ordinary phenomenon that is weak in its direct effects – it does not produce extensive Christ-likeness. Rather than “incarnational union,” Martyr’s referred terminology in his

letters for this fellowship of natures is “natural communion.”

Spiritual Communion with Christ

The second degree of communion with Christ, described by Peter Martyr’s 8 March, 1555, letter to John Calvin, is brought about by the Holy Spirit. This spiritual relation is effected by the Spirit of Christ, by which we are from our very regeneration renewed into the fashion of His glory.¹³

Unlike the natural communion, Martyr envisions this communion as distinctively and properly for elect Christians only, beginning at their

¹² Martyr to Beza, 105. *LC*, 777: “*Conjunctio ejusdem naturae, quam cum Christo ab ejus incarnatione communem habemus.... Non tamen Christianis est propria, sic enim Judaei, Turcae, et quotquot hominum censu comprehenduntur, cum Christo junguntur.*” NB: Gorham’s “in Christ” is better translated “with Christ.”

¹³ Martyr to Calvin, 343.

conversion.¹⁴ The subsequent progressive work of the Spirit in the believer's life makes him or her more and more *Christiformia* or "Christ-shaped" and thus fit for eternal life.¹⁵ Touching the believer even in body and nature, this "renovating influence of the Spirit" has a decidedly eschatological horizon.¹⁶ The process does not, however, truncate the believer's own humanity or confuse him substantially with Christ.¹⁷

Martyr gives his most moving passage on the doctrine of union with Christ when describing to Beza this progressive relation:

Now then we consist no more of our weak and feeble flesh,
nor of faulty and corrupt blood, neither of an unsavoury and
sickly soul, but we are clothed with the flesh of Christ, we are

¹⁴ Martyr to Calvin, 342: "So besides that communion [i.e., natural communion], there is added this; that, in due season, faith is breathed into the elect, whereby they may believe in Christ..." Martyr relates the same to Beza: "Wherefore it behoves that there comes another likeness [other than natural communion] whereby the nature of every Christian, as touching soul, body and blood, is joined to Christ. And that is when by the help and endowment of Christ's benefits we are renewed..." (Martyr to Beza, 105). Martyr's language here was obviously not intended to apply to Turks, Jews, and other non-Christians.

¹⁵ Martyr to Calvin, 342-343: At conversion, "faith is breathed into the elect, whereby they may believe in Christ; and thus they have not only remission of sins and reconciliation with God (wherein consists the true and solid method of justification), but, further, receive the renovating influence of the Spirit whereby our bodies also, our flesh, and blood, and nature, are made capable of immortality, and become every day more and more conformable to Christ (*Christiformia*), so to speak."

¹⁶ To Beza, Martyr repeats this theme. The believer's human body and soul are "adorned and daily more and more restored and finally made perfect" at the resurrection "by the heavenly gifts, which through believing, we have obtained" (Martyr to Beza, 105). The editor of Beza's correspondence thus terms the second degree of communion with Christ in his introductory notes not as "spiritual" but as "*éternelle, par la résurrection.*" Beza, 153.

¹⁷ Martyr to Calvin, 343: "Not that they [the elect] lose the substance of their own nature, and actually pass into the Body and Blood of Christ; but in spiritual gifts and properties they approach as men to Him, as in corporal flesh and blood they had from their very birth a natural fellowship with Him."

watered with the blood of Christ, we live and are moved by the soul of Christ.¹⁸

Thus, the terms “clothed,” “watered,” and “live and are moved” are for Martyr dynamic processes in the life of believers, implying real growth.

In his letter to Beza, the Italian Reformer closes his discussion of this second degree of communion with Christ with a clear summary:

You have therefore my singular good brother in few words comprehended the beginning and end of our communion or conjuncture with Christ. Then do we begin after some sort to be like unto him when we be born men and finally when by the faith of Christ we are restored unto his merits, gifts, benefits, and properties; which as we at our conversion begin to obtain, so we shall not have it fully perfect before we be advanced to eternal life by the blessed resurrection.¹⁹

By explicitly relating these two degrees of communion with Christ, Martyr indicates that spiritual communion is built upon natural communion, presupposing it both conceptually and chronologically.

Thus, in his 8 March, 1555, letters to Calvin and Beza, Peter Martyr depicts not just the beginning of our communion with Christ, but also the end. Though ordinary and feeble, the starting point is a natural communion that all men share by virtue of being human. The ending point, on the other hand, is a spiritual communion by the power of the Holy Spirit, particular to elect Christian believers only. The glorious end Martyr envisions is obtained by the progressive influence of the Spirit in the believer’s life, making him daily more like Christ.

These two degrees of communion with Christ do not constitute the whole of Martyr’s doctrine of union with Christ. Behind his experience of this second spiritual degree of communion – and in the pages of the Bible – he sees evidence of a third degree of communion with Christ driving the former. To this third degree I now turn.

Mystical Communion with Christ

In his 8 March, 1555, letter to John Calvin, Peter Martyr points to a third and final conjunction with Christ – a “mystical communion” – which he denominates “an intermediate one” between the natural and

¹⁸ Martyr to Beza, 105. This vivid imagery opens Martyr’s treatment of the second degree of communion with Christ in his letter to Beza.

¹⁹ Martyr to Beza, 105.

the spiritual relations previously described.²⁰ This union of secret mystery, like the second degree expounded before it, is peculiar to Christians alone and begins only at their true conversion: grafted into the Body of Christ, the glorified Lord becomes the true Head of the elect, and they truly obtain Him.²¹

Martyr posits the priority of this secret relation between the glorified Christ and the believer to any spiritual communion that takes place progressively:

This communion with our Head is prior, in nature at least, if not in time, to that later communion which is introduced through renovation.²²

Thus, mystical communion ranks before spiritual communion, not vice versa, according to Martyr.²³

²⁰ Martyr to Calvin, 343: "But I think that...there is an intermediate one, which is the fount and origin of all the celestial and spiritual likeness which we obtain, together with Christ..., this mystical communion...." In his letter to Beza, Martyr echoes: "Therefore between the first conjunction, which I call nature, and the latter, which I may justly say is of likeness or similitude, I put this mean which may be called a conjunction or union or of secret mystery...." (Martyr to Beza, 105-106). The Latin reads: "*Proinde inter primam conjunctionem quam naturae voco, & postremam quam similitudinis jure appellaverim, hanc mediam pono, quae unionis aut arcani mysterii dici potes*" LC, 778.

²¹ Martyr to Calvin, 343: "It is that whereby, as soon as we believe, we obtain Christ Himself, our true head, and are made His members.... Wherefore, when we are converted, Christ is made ours and we His, before we are rendered like Him in holiness and inherent righteousness. This is that secret communion whereby we are said to be grafted into Him." Again, this is not something Peter Martyr posits of Turks and Jews.

²² Martyr to Calvin, 343.

²³ Martyr to Calvin, 343: "And from this [mystical] communion which I have now explained that latter one [progressive spiritual communion] is perfected so long as we live on earth. For the members of Christ are ever intent on becoming more like Him." Whether mystical union necessarily occurs in a temporal interval before the first spiritual improvements in the life of the elect, Martyr wisely abstains from resolving. Could Martyr's hesitation over this temporal sequence be prompted by uncertainty over the experience of Old Testament believers, who shared in the benefits of Christ before the incarnation and their mystical union with the historical Christ? Whatever the

Continuing with this anatomical theme, Martyr then gives an extended illustration of this relationship between mystical and spiritual communion with Christ.²⁴ Just as the heart pumps blood to every organ through veins that unite them, so too does Christ the fount of life send his Spirit to each member united to Him. Mystical communion provides the same connection between Christ and His members that veins provide between the heart and liver.²⁵ The succor of the Spirit then engenders progressive communion, growth, and renovation of lifestyle in the believer.²⁶

His letter to Beza shows clearly that Martyr was compelled to acknowledge the existence of mystical communion by more than just his own personal experience; the Scriptures also lead the Reformer to his conclusions.²⁷ The scriptural passages Martyr acknowledges as implying this third mystical degree of communion with Christ are Ephesians 4:16 and Colossians 2:19, as well as the marriage motif in Ephesians 5:30-32.²⁸ His primary concern is to account for the fullness of the Holy Spirit in the believer flowing “from the Head itself” to all

case, it is clear that a believer does not work his way up to mystical union via spiritual improvements.

²⁴ Curiously, Gorham omits this portion of Martyr’s 8 March, 1555, letter to Calvin. It is found, however, in Anthonie Marten’s translation. See *Common Places* (hereafter, *CP*) [Appendix], 97.

²⁵ Aware that any illustration can be taken too far, Martyr cautions: “And although that this similitude ought not to be curiouslie orged as touching all the parties thereof, yet doth it after a sort laie the matter before our eyes, and doth shewe us, that after we be now men as he was, this first communion with Christ, that we are made his members, ensueth.” *CP* [Appendix], 97.

²⁶ As Martyr vividly describes it: “For according as the spirit floweth from him, he fashioneth and ioyneth unto him sometime this member and sometime that, and by the spirit it selfe, maketh the same like unto him in properties and temperature, forsomuch as they naturallie agree now together.” *CP* [Appendix], 97.

²⁷ Martyr to Beza, 105: “Howbeit between the beginning and end of this communion we must grant and believe that there is a mean, which is secret and much less perceived than those two extreme communions rehearsed. Yet nevertheless it is perceived, if with a faithful attention we consider the Holy Scriptures.”

²⁸ Allusions to these passages are clear in both letters. Martyr points Calvin to the same scriptural metaphors he mentions to Beza. Martyr to Beza, 106: “...the mystical degree is expressed in the Holy Scriptures under the metaphor of members and the head, of the husband and the wife.” See also Martyr to Calvin, 343.

His limbs.²⁹ Paul's thematic intertwining of marriage and the believer's relation to Christ leads Martyr to acknowledge that the elect are after conversion "flesh of His flesh, bone of His bone."³⁰ No extended exegesis, however, is given in this correspondence.

The physical distance between the glorified Christ and the believer on earth puts no stop to this secret communion, according to Martyr.³¹ Saving faith, the Word of God, and the sacraments are all "bonds or fastenings" that have their origin from Christ and supply believers with an efficient flow of the Spirit from the Head.³² These are then not just "notes and symbols of a true communion with Christ" but "ties and joints through which the Spirit of God becomes efficacious...."³³

Although Martyr holds the sacraments in this high position, he does not think that they are absolutely indispensable and is wary of sacramental theories that might twist this important mystical bond into a crass mixture of substances between Christ and the believer. Cyril of Alexandria's teaching provokes special concern from him.³⁴ He fears this teaching would

²⁹ Martyr to Calvin, 343: "It is that whereby, as soon as we believe, we obtain Christ Himself, our true head, and are made His members. Whence from the Head itself (as St. Paul says [Eph. iv. 16]) His Spirit flows, and is derived through the joints and ligaments into us, as his true and legitimate members."

³⁰ "This is that secret communion whereby we are said to be grafted into Him. Thus we first put Him on; and so are called by the Apostle flesh of His flesh, bone of His bones" (Martyr to Calvin, 343). This is obviously deduced from a comparison of Ephesians 5:31-32 with Genesis 2:23-24.

³¹ Martyr to Calvin, 343: "Nor does interval of space hinder this mystical communion, but it may be enjoyed while we live on earth, although the very Body of Christ be seated and reigning with the Father in Heaven."

³² Martyr to Calvin, 343: "It is quite sufficient that we be knit by certain links and ties of a spiritual kind unto Him. And yet these bonds or fastenings hang upon and are derived from the Head Himself; and these are, Faith (in the first place), God's Word, and His Sacrament. Through those means the Spirit flowing from our Head, is diffused through the Church, and quickens and shapes His members in due proportion."

³³ Martyr to Calvin, 344. Martyr goes on to qualify this statement, making faith in the believer a necessary prerequisite.

³⁴ "These [three] communions with Christ I acknowledge, but others (to say the truth) I do not understand. I speak thus chiefly in regard of that which some even of the Fathers introduce, especially Cyril; who make the substance of the Body and Blood of Christ in such wise our food, that they assert it to be really intermingled with our substance. I cannot see how they can escape the position when they thus speak; that our identical flesh and blood, which is so

tie grace and the Spirit either to the outward Word or to Sacraments, as though none could possibly be united to his Head, – I mean Christ, – without them. In adults, faith is the only necessary link and joint whereby we are united to Christ, and that indissolubly.³⁵

Ending his polemic on a conciliatory note, however, the Italian Reformer concludes:

This is which, perchance, the Fathers intended by their own hyperbolical expressions, in the immoderate use of which they have both left us their writings obscured, and moreover, have afforded a large handle to many errors.³⁶

In his closing sentences to Beza, Martyr recaps his teaching and then also emphasizes that mystic union does not imply a mingling of substance between Christ and the believer.³⁷ Paul's marriage motif in Ephesians 5 itself rules out a mixture of substance: husbands and wives are indeed one without it. Martyr posits a vital exchange, not a material one, between Christ and the believer based on an accomplished association between them almost too marvelous to describe.

nourished, is transmuted into the same personal substance with Christ; thus diffusing His Body into innumerable places" (Martyr to Calvin, 344). Martyr's repudiation of Cyril of Alexandria is also repeated to Beza: "I will not so easily subscribe to Cyril who affirmed such a communion as thereby even the substance of the flesh and blood of Christ, first is joined to the blessing (for so he calls the holy bread) and then that it is also mingled by the meat [*per illum cibum*, i.e., the food, the sacramental elements] with the flesh and blood of the communicants" (Martyr to Beza, 106). Martyr obviously has in mind transubstantiation.

³⁵ Martyr to Calvin, 344.

³⁶ Martyr to Calvin, 344.

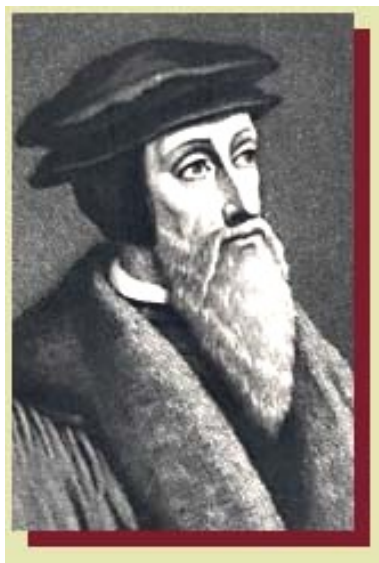
³⁷ Martyr to Beza, 106: "And even as the substance of the head is not mingled with the substance of the foot or hand, although it be knit and joined to them by most straight knots. Again as the substance of the body of the husband grows up not to one and the same body with the wife, although by a singular bond it be coupled together with it, so are we by a wonderful and inward society joined with the body and blood of Christ, although that our substance of each part remain unmingled." This is also emphasized in Martyr's letter to Calvin. See Martyr to Calvin, 343.

Mystical communion with Christ is, then, for Peter Martyr a fact in the life of elect believers only. Its reality is actively enjoyed by them, but it is biblical teaching that ultimately drives Martyr to posit its existence. Because of this secret union, the gift of the Holy Spirit is the believer's in full measure. Thus, mystical communion is prior, at least in nature if not in time, to spiritual communion effected by the Holy Ghost. Saving faith, the Word of God, and the sacraments are the hooks that bind the believer to Christ, through which the Spirit becomes efficacious, overcoming the linear distance between Christ and true believers. Any mixture of substance, Martyr says, is definitely not in view.

Martyr on Incarnational Communion

Does the picture of Martyr's conception of union with Christ gathered from his correspondence with Calvin of 8 March, 1555, fit with his other theological writings? Can this understanding of Martyr's doctrine of incarnational communion be confirmed in his wider corpus and thought?

Unfortunately, a definitive scientific edition of Martyr's works has yet to be compiled, leaving the scholar with numerous and varied editions of his commentaries, lectures, and treatises.³⁸ The most complex mixture of Vermigliana is found in the posthumously published *Loci Communes* collections, which runs to thirteen different major Latin editions, dating from 1576 until 1656, and one English translation, dated 1583.³⁹



John Calvin

³⁸ A cursory glance at Donnelly, Kingdon, and Anderson's *Bibliography of the Works of Peter Martyr Vermigli* (Kirksville, MO: Truman State University Press, 1991) makes this abundantly clear. See Donnelly, Kingdon, and Anderson, 1-154 for the best listing of these materials and their locations. Anderson laments the lack of a scientific text. See Anderson, *Peter Martyr*, 1975, 537.

³⁹ Donnelly, Kingdon, and Anderson, 98-127.

Compiled mainly from his commentaries, the *Loci Communes* editions are a topical arrangement of the theological excurses Martyr wove into the fabric of his passage-by-passage comments on the biblical text.⁴⁰ Arranged after the pattern of Calvin's 1559 *Institutes*, the first Latin edition was assembled by Robert Masson some fourteen years after Martyr's death. Subsequent editions include various collections of Martyr's letters and a short bibliography by Josiah Simler.⁴¹ Thus, while caution must be exercised when using the *Loci Communes*, it does provide the best one-volume summary of Martyr's overall theology available.⁴²

The *Loci Communes*

A survey of Martyr's *Loci Communes* confirms the conclusions we have drawn from his letters to Calvin and Beza on incarnational communion with Christ. The clearest section treating this topic is given under the heading "What is the union of the godlie with Christ," drawn from Martyr's commentary on Romans 8.⁴³ Here the Italian Reformer begins considering the most obvious fact of all – Christ is "joined with all men" by virtue of his humanity.⁴⁴ Universal in scope, this relation is obviously not peculiar to Christians. It is a natural communion, based

⁴⁰ Donnelly, Kingdon, and Anderson, x-xi.

⁴¹ Donnelly, Kingdon, and Anderson, 98.

⁴² Precedent does exist in serious Martyr studies for relying on the *Loci Communes* quite heavily. For example, see J.P. Donnelly, *Calvinism and Scholasticism in Vermigli's Doctrine of Man and Grace* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1976), 154-159. It could even be argued that the *Loci Communes* gives the reader Martyr's most mature reflection on a theological topic, rather than his more abbreviated thought in his running commentary on the biblical text. It is safest to allow Martyr himself to draw the connections between passages and topics, rather than for the twentieth-century researcher to attempt an interpolation or extrapolation. Advice for the researcher when using the *Loci Communes* is given in M.W. Anderson, *Peter Martyr: A Reformer in Exile (1542-1562)* (Nieuwkoop: B. DeGraaf, 1975), 536-537.

⁴³ CP [3], 77-79. The marginal note at the first of this section reads: "In Rom. 8, at the beginning." Martyr's *In Epistolam S. Pauli Apostoli ad Romanos commentarij doctissimi* was first published in 1558. Donnelly, Kingdon, and Anderson, 18.

⁴⁴ "First commeth in place, that which is common unto all mortall men: for the sonne of God, because he tooke upon him the nature of man, is joined with all men" (CP [3], 77-8). The Latin reads: "*Primum id occurrit, quod omnibus mortalibus est commune. Dei enim filius, quia suscepit humanam naturam, cum omnibus hominibus conjunctus est.*" LC, 353.

on the biological or genetic “flesh and blood” connections between all men.⁴⁵ While this material relationship is *generalis*, it is yet *infirm*, since the natures of unregenerate man and of Christ are so very different: Christ’s human nature is pure, but ours is polluted.⁴⁶ In pointing to this conjunction, Martyr is merely emphasizing the likeness of kind between Christ and his fellow men. Therefore, Martyr turns in another direction to define “what it is to be in Christ.”⁴⁷

Only by the work of the Holy Spirit can the nature of man be reconditioned after the image of Christ.⁴⁸ To be “in him after such a sort” is the biblical image.⁴⁹ Therefore, the remainder of the excursus

⁴⁵ CP [3], 78: “For seeing they have fellowship with flesh and blood, as testifieth the epistle to the Hebrews, he also was made partaker of flesh and blood. But this conjunction is generall, and weake, and onlie (as I may terme it) according to the matter....” The Latin reads: “Nam cum ipsi commercium habeant cum carne & sanguine, ut testatur Epistola ad Hebr, ipse quoque carnis & sanguinis factus est particeps. Sed ista conjunctio generalis est & infirma, tantum, ut ita dicam, juxta materiam” (LC, 353). Note that Hebrews 2:14 was also cited by Martyr in his correspondence to Calvin and Beza. Again, there is nothing in Martyr’s argument that does not also apply to the relationship between any two human beings.

⁴⁶ “But this conjunction is generall, and weake, and onlie (as I may terme it) according to the matter: for the nature of man far differeth from that nature which Christ tooke upon him. For the humane nature in Christ, is both immortall, and exempted from sinne, and adorned with all purenes: but our nature is unpure, corruptible, and miserablie polluted with sinne ...” (CP [3], 78). The first word of the above quote is the turning point of Martyr’s thought in this section of the *Loci Communes*.

⁴⁷ Martyr begins considering rhetorically: “Now must we see, what it is to be in Christ” (CP [3], 77). The Latin reads: “*Videre jam oportet, quid sit esse in Christo*” (LC, 353). He first turns to consider natural communion: “First commeth in place, that which is common unto all mortall men: for the sonne of God, because he tooke upon him the nature of man, is joined with all men” (CP [3], 77-8). The Latin reads: “*Primum id occurrit, quod omnibus mortalibus est commune. Dei enim filius, quia suscepit humanam naturam, cum omnibus hominibus conjunctus est*” (LC, 353). However, Martyr quickly adds that our pollution makes us quite different by nature from Christ, so that he points elsewhere for the true meaning of “in Christ.”

⁴⁸ “...our nature is unpure, corruptible, and miserablie polluted with sinne: but if the same be indued with the spirit of Christ, it is so repaired, as it differeth not much from the nature of Christ.” CP [3], 77-78.

⁴⁹ CP [3], 78: “Wherefore the Apostle pronounceth them free from sinne, which do abide in Christ, and are in him after such a sort, as I have now

from Martyr's commentary on Romans 8 in the *Loci Communes* explicitly applies only to regenerate Christians.⁵⁰ Here the remaining two degrees of union with Christ are outlined, although perhaps not as fully as in Martyr's correspondence.⁵¹ The earlier date of this material may account for this difference in development.⁵² Thus, the major outlines of Martyr's threefold union with Christ are present in his earlier writing on the subject.

Christ's Conception

The key matter with regard to this present investigation is that incarnational communion is seen as universal yet infirm. Yet why is this relation both so general and so weak? One approach to answering this question is to examine Martyr's understanding of the incarnation in

declared; to the end that they may live his life, be of the same mind that he is, and bring forth such fruit of works as differ not from his fruits." *LC* 353: "*Eos itaque Apostolus pronunciat liberatos esse a peccato, qui manent in Christo, & in eo sunt eo modo, quo jam exposuimus, ut vitam ejus vivant, idem cum eo sentiant, & fructus operum non diversos a fructibus ejus edant.*" After turning his argument from natural communion to regeneration, Martyr displays this conviction by referring to six New Testament passages in quick succession: Ephesians 5:30, I Corinthians 2:16, Philippians 2:5, Romans 6:15, John 15:5, and Ephesians 5:23. It is also noteworthy that not until turning to regeneration does Martyr use the biblical phrase "in Christ."

⁵⁰ *CP* [3], 78. Martyr later reinforces this division between the regenerate and the unregenerate: "It is a mere imagination brought by our adversaries, that there can be withered and dead members in the bodie of Christ, the which may be reniued againe. A member that is dead, is a member no more, neither yet ought to be called a member..." (*CP* [3], 79). Thus, Martyr clearly denies that the unregenerate are members of the body of Christ.

⁵¹ The titles "mystical" and "spiritual" communion are not used here. Martyr does, however, draw out two dimensions of the regenerate's union with Christ: one a definitive act of grafting, the other a dynamic process of nourishment (see *CP* [3], 78). These two categories correspond to Martyr's division of mystical and spiritual communion in his correspondence. Both apply only to those in whom the Holy Spirit lives, and only then does Martyr apply the biblical image of "ingrafting." The Johannine ingrafting theme is one of Martyr's favorites. See, for example, *CP* [2], 624, *CP* [2], 629, and *CP* [Appendix], 124-126.

⁵² Although the *Loci Communes* was first published in 1576, the material in this section was drawn from Martyr's Romans commentary, which was first published in 1558 but was based on his Oxford lectures of 1550-1552. Donnelly, Kingdon, and Anderson, 18.

more detail. Precisely how does he envision the incarnation as having occurred? The *Loci Communes* goes into great detail on the specific mechanics of Christ's conception when expounding the Apostles' Creed.⁵³ These details help shed further light on the nature of Martyr's doctrine of incarnational communion with Christ.

Martyr firmly believes in the virgin birth of Christ and sees it as ensuring that the Saviour was born without original sin.⁵⁴ Mary's biological and genetic contribution to her son was purified by the Holy Spirit who overshadowed her, the result being the creation of "a singular and perfect man."⁵⁵ The body of Christ was prepared by this purification, whereas his soul was immediately created perfect by God.⁵⁶ Thus, Martyr considers the cleansing of Mary's seed, which results in Christ's original righteousness, to be properly the work of the Holy Spirit.

Martyr is comfortable drawing close connections between the body of Christ and the body of Adam before the Fall.⁵⁷ Martyr also draws a

⁵³ This moving exposition by Martyr of the Apostles' Creed is found in *CP* [2], 612-640.

⁵⁴ "Wherefore, to exempt Christ, according to the flesh, from the common fall of all mankind, so as he might ever reteinne his own nature; the wisdom of God decreed by a wonderful counsell, that man, which was to be assumed in the unities of person, should have a beginning, both divine and humane." *CP* [2], 616.

⁵⁵ "For this cause, as it had beene foreshewed by the angell unto Marie, so the holie Ghost came downe into her, and by the principall power thereof, the blood being now purified by his grace, did create a singular and perfect man, which the merciful God, even God, which was the word from everlasting, did miraculously take upon him." *CP* [2], 616.

⁵⁶ "Insomuch as the wombe of the virgine Marie, and holy mother was the divine furnace, whereby the holie Ghost, of a matter well purified, builded this one onelie bodie, which was a most obedient instrument of a noble soule. And by this means, all the old blemishes of Adam were alienated from Christ..." (*CP*[2], 616). Donnelly shows that Martyr was an immediate creationist instead of a transducianist: "the soul is created sinless but becomes contaminated by original sin as soon as joined to a body which descends from Adam." See Donnelly, *Calvinism and Scholasticism*, 91-92, 112. The purification of Mary's blood prevents this contamination in the case of Jesus.

⁵⁷ "And by this means, all the old blemishes of Adam were alienated from Christ, albeit that his bodie, as concerning the nature and form of creation, was not much disagreeable from the bodie of Adam. For our first parent Adam also was marvellously, and by divine power created out of the earth, without accustomed seed." *CP* [2], 616-617.

close connection between the cleansing of Mary's blood at the incarnation and the later regeneration of the elect at their conversion. Both the cleansing of the precursor to Christ's human nature and the cleansing of the elect involve a "heaping of divine gifts" upon human nature.⁵⁸

In the only major study of Martyr's doctrine of man to date, Donnelly has shown that the Italian Reformer is true to his Aristotelian and Thomist roots.⁵⁹ Martyr's works "are in fact shot through with the Aristotelian principles of being."⁶⁰ Using the four Aristotelian causes, Martyr analyzes the full union that regenerate believers have with Christ.⁶¹ His conceptions of substance/accidents, matter/form, and person are also all traditional.⁶² Therefore, Donnelly concludes, Martyr can "insist that man has the same substance (that he is the same

⁵⁸ "...[W]ho so is regenerated by Christ, must call to remembrance, what and how great hath bene the love of God towards us, who disdained not our soul and uncleane nature; but cleansing the same, did cloth himselfe therewith, to make us partakers of his divine nature.... [T]he divine word hath cleansed our nature, by heaping of divine gifts upon the same. And this is not onelie to be understood, touching that man [i.e., Christ], which it assumed; but all them, which with him in true faith be joined together as members of him." *CP* [2], 617.

⁵⁹ Terming Martyr's philosophy of man as "popular Aristotelianism," Donnelly concludes his long chapter on Martyr's anthropology: "Aside from the rational indemonstrability of the soul's immortality and the enumeration of the internal senses, almost all of Martyr's teaching in this chapter have direct parallels in Thomas Aquinas" (Donnelly, *Calvinism and Scholasticism*, 100). In a lengthy review, J. C. McLelland praises Donnelly's treatment of Martyr's anthropology as a "solid analysis" (J. C. McLelland, "Calvinism Perfecting Thomism? Peter Martyr Vermigli's Question," 574). See also McLelland, "Peter Martyr Vermigli: Scholastic or Humanist?," 150.

⁶⁰ Donnelly, *Calvinism and Scholasticism*, 72.

⁶¹ "Hereby it is manifest, in what sort faithfull and godlie men are in Christ; and that by all the kinds of causes. For Christ and we have all one matter, also we have the selfe-same first entrances of forme: for we are indued with the selfe-same notes, properties, and conditions which he had. The efficient cause whereby we are moved to worke, is the same spirit whereby he was moved. Lastlie, the end is all one; namelie, that the glorie of God may be advanced" (*CP* [3], 78). For a discussion of the material, formal, effective, and final causes, see Donnelly, *Calvinism and Scholasticism*, 157-158.

⁶² Donnelly, *Calvinism and Scholasticism*, 71-74. For example, "Martyr accepts the traditional definition: a person is an individual substance of a rational nature." Donnelly, *Calvinism and Scholasticism*, 73.

individual and remains in the same species) even after the resurrection and its gift of risen qualities.”⁶³

This same note of continuity is seen in Martyr’s understanding of the incarnation itself: the substance of Mary, which is purified by the Holy Spirit, remains human substance even after it is changed by God. Thus, when Martyr calls natural communion with Christ “*tantum, ut ita dicam, juxta materiam,*” he is very specifically highlighting the continuity between Christ and man, even in his fallen state. In declaring the incarnational conjunction to be *generalis*, Martyr is pointing to this continuity of substance. In declaring the incarnational conjunction to be *infirma*, however, Martyr is pointing to their profound discontinuity of accident.⁶⁴ Only after regeneration by the Holy Spirit can a fallen man be said to have a continuity of accident with Jesus Christ.⁶⁵ This continuity of accident also applies to Christ and to Adam before the Fall.⁶⁶

Vermigliana Secondary Literature

The important matter of union with Christ – even incarnational communion – has not gone unnoticed by scholars of Peter Martyr Vermigli. Anderson calls attention to Martyr’s correspondence with Calvin on union with Christ, noting that “Martyr broached the question in his revisions for the *Consensus* which Calvin could not insert at the last moment.”⁶⁷ In his article on Martyr’s Romans commentary, repeated references to the doctrine testify to its importance in the Reformer’s understanding of sanctification.⁶⁸ The longest treatment of union with Christ in Martyr’s thought is given in Anderson’s *Peter Martyr: A Reformer in Exile (1542-1562)*.⁶⁹ This ten-page treatment is decidedly historical in emphasis; Anderson’s goal is apparently to show

⁶³ Donnelly, *Calvinism and Scholasticism*, 72.

⁶⁴ “...[F]or the nature of man far differeth from that nature which Christ tooke upon him. For the humane nature in Christ, is both immortall, and exempted from sinne, and adorned with all purenes: but our nature is unpure, corruptible, and miserable polluted with sinne....” CP [3], 78.

⁶⁵ “...[O]ur nature is unpure, corruptible, and miserable polluted with sinne: but if the same be indued with the spirit of Christ, it is so repaired, as it differeth not much from the nature of Christ.” CP [3], 77-78.

⁶⁶ Christ, however, “excelled Adam in all excellent gifts of nature.” CP [2], 617.

⁶⁷ Anderson, “Peter Martyr, Reformed Theologian (1542-1562),” 58.

⁶⁸ Anderson, “Peter Martyr on Romans,” 401-420.

⁶⁹ Anderson, *Peter Martyr*, 186-195.

that Martyr's exegesis may well have shaped Calvin's understanding of the doctrine.⁷⁰ He does not treat incarnational communion.

Donnelly devotes a brief section to Martyr's doctrine of union with Christ, noticing the fundamental difference between the Saviour's communion with men in general and the regenerate in particular.⁷¹ The grounding of union with Christ in predestination is stressed by Donnelly, but this "material union" is not developed further.⁷² Donnelly's brief section on union with Christ in Martyr's theology is commended by McLelland, who wished that it had been longer.⁷³

McLelland's interest in union with Christ dates back to his New College Ph.D. dissertation, completed in April, 1953, under the supervision of T. F. Torrance and published in 1957 without significant revision.⁷⁴ This work on Martyr's view of the sacraments is divided into three parts, the second of which is entitled "Union with Christ" and sets out Martyr's teaching on the church, baptism, and eucharist. However, it is in two shorter sections that McLelland specifically treats

⁷⁰ Anderson's style is woodenly factual and his line of logic convoluted. He spins a web of multiple names, dates, and events, finally drawing a conclusion that is most difficult to follow. His main concern is to suggest that Martyr, rather than Bucer, influenced Calvin's view of progressive sanctification through his doctrine of union with Christ. He concludes, "After Martyr's *I Corinthians* (1551), letters to Calvin and Beza of 1555 and *Romans* of 1558, Calvin spoke about union with Christ. Martyr left his mark on Calvin's theology." Anderson, *Peter Martyr*, 194. See also John Calvin, *Calvin: Theological Treatises*, trans. and ed. J. K. S. Reid (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1954), 292 [CO 9:490-491].

⁷¹ "For Martyr justification brings man into a new relation with Jesus Christ. Since the incarnation there has been a material union based on the Word's assumption of human nature. Christ shares flesh and blood with all men, but the justified achieve a higher union with Christ, a union by insertion into Christ." Donnelly, *Calvinism and Scholasticism*, 157.

⁷² Donnelly, *Calvinism and Scholasticism*, 157-158.

⁷³ McLelland, "Calvinism Perfecting Thomism? Peter Martyr Vermigli's Question," 575.

⁷⁴ Joseph C. McLelland, "The Doctrine of the Sacraments in the Theology of Peter Martyr Vermigli (A.D. 1500-1562)" (Ph.D. diss., University of Edinburgh, 1953); J.C. McLelland, *The Visible Words of God, An Exposition of the Sacramental Theology of Peter Martyr Vermigli, A.D. 1500-1562* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1957).

incarnational communion, each citing Martyr's letters to Calvin and Beza.⁷⁵

The first section that discusses natural communion with Christ is titled "The O.T. Saints as Members of Christ." Explaining the relationship between the incarnation and Old Testament believers, McLelland mentions Martyr's teaching:

By His Incarnation, Christ effected a "general union" with all mankind, weak and "material" but real and of ultimate significance for revelation.⁷⁶

McLelland then passes on to Christ's spiritual communion with Old Testament saints.

What is noteworthy here is that this is the only time McLelland ever treats Martyr's clear theme that natural communion by virtue of the incarnation is *debilis* and *infirmus*.⁷⁷ McLelland draws no particular conclusions from the fact that this degree of union is "weak."⁷⁸ Instead, he stresses that it is "real and of ultimate significance for revelation," smothering Martyr's *debilis* with other theological concerns.⁷⁹

⁷⁵ These are found on pages 88-91 and 142-147 of McLelland's *Visible Words of God*, the published form of his Ph.D. dissertation. The importance of the doctrine of union with Christ in McLelland's eyes should not be downplayed. In one article he calls union with Christ "perhaps the distinctive characteristic and contribution of his [Martyr's] theology..." (McLelland, "Calvinism Perfecting Thomism? Peter Martyr Vermigli's Question," 575). In another article he designates union with Christ "the literal heart of his [Martyr's] theology, yet one still neglected by recent research." McLelland, "Peter Martyr Vermigli: Scholastic or Humanist?", 150. It is odd that something so important to him has not been dealt with in more detail in his own work.

⁷⁶ McLelland, *Visible Words of God*, 88.

⁷⁷ The theme is mentioned in a long block quote at the beginning of the later section, but merits no comment on that occasion.

⁷⁸ The selective use of quotation marks in the block quote above is McLelland's. In truth, Martyr does use the term "weak" side-by-side with the terms "general" and "material."

⁷⁹ Martyr does not specifically claim that incarnational communion is important for revelation. This is, rather, one of McLelland's theological deductions that cannot be substantiated by the material examined in the present study. The main question McLelland is addressing in this section is a good one: "But does not this presuppose the Incarnation as historical actuality, and so deny the O.T. saints membership in this same Christ which we have for our Head?" McLelland appears, however, to compress the importance of the

The later section in the dissertation where McLelland discusses incarnational communion with Christ is titled “Union and Communion” and deals principally with the believer’s union with Christ. McLelland does, however, correlate it with incarnational communion:

Christ actually joins Himself to man by two unions: by Incarnation and by Spirit. The latter presupposes the former, and together they reveal a union as close as it is complete. ...In terms of the Incarnation, every man is ‘in Christ’. But the second union means that Christ is ‘in us’, for His properties are truly put into us, properties that are not ‘natural’ as those of the first, general union were: freedom over sin, eternal life, even incorruptibility.⁸⁰

Martyr’s letters to Calvin and Beza are then correlated with these two degrees of union and used to introduce the mean between them: the believer’s mystical union with Christ.

The significance of this section for Martyr’s doctrine of incarnational communion is that the watch-words *debilis* and *infirmus* have dropped from McLelland’s comments altogether. Martyr is intent on stressing the paucity of effects that flow from men solely having flesh and blood like Jesus. McLelland’s terminology is, however, at best ambiguous and could even convey exactly the opposite meaning. Martyr’s language is much more cautious than McLelland’s blanket claim in the block quote above. While Martyr admits the incarnation produces a natural communion between Christ and all humans, his use of the key biblical phrase “in Christ” is more restrained and qualified. He does not attach it to mere natural communion: for Martyr, all men are not “in Christ” or “engrafted into Christ.”⁸¹ In this way, the nature of Martyr’s doctrine of incarnational communion has been obscured by exclusively stressing its extent.

incarnate Christ as the ante-type of Old Testament revelation into the incarnation itself, which is in turn compressed into incarnational union. McLelland, *Visible Words of God*, 88-91.

⁸⁰ McLelland, *Visible Words of God*, 142-143.

⁸¹ See footnote 93. When considering the biblical phrase “in Christ,” J. S. Stewart chided Deissmann’s more aggressive interpretation: “Having made his discovery, he is inclined to apply it everywhere without exception. He forces his key into every lock. He gives to certain passages a weight more than the words can really bear” (see J. S. Stewart, *A Man in Christ* [London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1935], 157-158). Has McLelland done the same with Martyr?

Between the time McLelland completed his dissertation and its publication in Britain and America, his first article on Peter Martyr appeared in the *Scottish Journal of Theology*.⁸² Arguing that Martyr did not believe in double predestination, McLelland proposes that union with Christ is the key to a proper understanding of predestination because it provides the right Christological context for the doctrine.⁸³ In short, union with Christ is “the normative dogma of Reformed theology.”⁸⁴

In the final three paragraphs of the article, McLelland struggles with the mysteries of rejection and iniquity. He concludes the first of these three paragraphs with the observation that Martyr saw God’s will as the final, but not the efficient, cause of these phenomena.⁸⁵

The second of these three paragraphs opens stressing “the positive doctrine that informs all Peter Martyr’s theology: *faith means union with Christ*.”⁸⁶ McLelland next claims that predestination is “specifically related to” union with Christ, giving a “striking example of this” in Martyr’s use of predestination to explain infant baptism. McLelland then concludes the paragraph:

Or again, Martyr makes much of the fact that by His Incarnation Christ united all men to Himself, and only on the

⁸² Unfortunately, McLelland’s name was misspelled when printed. J. C. McClelland [sic], “The Reformed Doctrine of Predestination According to Peter Martyr,” *Scottish Journal of Theology* 8 (1955): 255-271. During this time, the *Scottish Journal of Theology* was edited by McLelland’s former Ph.D. supervisor, T. F. Torrance. The occasion for McLelland’s writing was Barth’s juxtaposition of his “impressive critical analysis” of predestination and his “historically misleading” claim that Peter Martyr’s proper treatment of predestination occurred “after Calvin.” See McClelland [sic], 255-256; and Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics* II/2, ed. G. W. Bromiley and T. F. Torrance (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1957), 84.

⁸³ McLelland’s claim that Peter Martyr Vermigli did not believe in double predestination has been dismissed by more recent scholarship. For example, see Frank A. James III, “A Late Medieval Parallel in Reformation Thought: *Gemina Praedestinatio* in Gregory of Rimini and Peter Martyr Vermigli,” in *Via Augustini: Augustine in the Latter Middle Ages, Renaissance, and Reformation; essays in honor of Damasus Trapp*, ed. H. A. Oberman and F. A. James, III in cooperation with E. L. Saak (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1991), 183.

⁸⁴ McClelland [sic], 255 and 270.

⁸⁵ McClelland [sic], 270.

⁸⁶ McClelland [sic], 270. The emphasis is McLelland’s.

basis of this universal union with Christ is the inward union of faith possible.⁸⁷

The third and final of these paragraphs resolves the dilemmas of rejection and iniquity in light of the doctrine of union with Christ:

The mystery of rejection, like the mystery of iniquity itself, can be rationalized as much by rescuing God from all contact with it as by assigning it to his will. But what must save the doctrine of predestination from a logic which perverts the Gospel into the half-will of a rationalized Deity is the Christological context and content: *in Christ* and *into Christ*. And precisely here the distinctive contribution of Peter Martyr to the theology of the Reformation has ultimate relevance, for he was explicit where others were implicit in referring all theology to this Christological touchstone.⁸⁸

McLelland's final footnote points to John Calvin as an example of one who agreed with Martyr's more explicit doctrine of union with Christ.

If McLelland's statements on Martyr's doctrine of incarnational communion were ambiguous in his dissertation, then his first article in the *Scottish Journal of Theology* removes the ambiguity. McLelland gets so caught up in the glories of Christ's spiritual union with the regenerate and a desire to protect God from Calvinistic forms of logic, that he appears to inflate natural union and the use Martyr makes of the doctrine. Here natural communion with Christ has been elevated to new heights. No longer is it a thing of great weakness – *debilis* and *infirmum* – producing no substantive effects in the lives of those it touches. Rather, it is the new hinterground of meaning in light of which all theology is now to be defined. It is even something of which "Martyr makes much," which from our research appears most doubtful.

Instead, Martyr's doctrine of natural communion with Christ appears to have been redeployed – and in the process inescapably reshaped – by McLelland. Proceeding by paraphrase at this pivotal point in his line of historical reasoning, the raw material of Peter Martyr Vermigli has been reforged into a fundamental part for the

⁸⁷ McClelland [sic], 271. This is the first explicit reference to incarnational union in McLelland's article. No specific references to substantiate this sweeping claim are given.

⁸⁸ McClelland [sic], 271.

Barthian engine that McLelland is seeking to build.⁸⁹ Though creative, this theological move is, however, one which Martyr did not make. McLelland has so selectively emphasized the extent of incarnational communion in Martyr's theology as to reconstruct the true nature of it. McLelland's conclusions are best understood as reflecting the mid-twentieth-century context in which they appear.

⁸⁹ For example, the whole warp and woof of Martyr's treatment of incarnational union is based on a comparison of the spiritual lives of Christians, Turks and Jews – a fact hardly compatible with Barth's aversion to natural theology.