

Sebastian Castellio and the Holy Supper: re-reading Zwingli in the pursuit of tolerance

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The debate concerning the true nature of the Holy Supper runs through the concluding chapters of the second book of *De Arte Dubitandi*. In this text – interrupted by the death of its author, in 1563, and preserved as a manuscript which was discovered in the second half of the twentieth century¹ – Sebastian Castellio summarizes and organizes his doctrine of tolerance, applying his theoretical principles to the most controversial themes, on which Christianity was hopelessly divided: the Trinity, the Justification and, indeed, the Holy Supper. Whereas the literature did not hesitate to find elements of fundamental difference between the proposal developed by Castellio and the Reformed tradition as regards the first two points², the judgment was the opposite with respect to the doctrine of the Holy Supper. Reminiscent of the bitter struggles of the second sacramental dispute³, the Savoyard humanist seemed to enter the theological debate without proposing any substantial changes in comparison with the arguments already used by Zwingli in order to legitimize a spiritual interpretation of the Holy Supper against the one offered by Luther⁴.

Apparently the solution proposed in *De Arte Dubitandi* is, therefore,

¹ *De Arte Dubitandi* original manuscript runs through Ff. 56 to 167 of Miscellany n. 505 preserved in Gemmente Bibliothek, Rotterdam. Modern editions: Sebastian *Castellio*, *De Arte Dubitandi*, edited by Elizabeth *Feist*, in: Reale Accademia d'Italia, studi e documenti VII, edited by Delio *Cantimori*, Roma, 1937; Sebastian *Castellio*, *De Arte Dubitandi et confidendi, ignorandi et sciendi*, edited by Elizabeth *Feist*, Leiden, 1981. Quotations in the following pages are from the latter one.

² As regards Castellio's Eucharistic doctrine the literature is lacking in detailed description and must be gleaned from monographic studies. Among the traditional analyses of Castellio the following may be noted as reference: Ferdinand *Buisson*, *Sébastien Castellion, sa vie et son œuvre (1515–1563)*. Étude sur les origines du protestantisme libéral français, 2 Voll., Paris, 1892 (Reprint: Nieuwkoop, 1964); Hans Rudolf *Guggisberg*, *Sebastian Castellio im Urteil seiner Nachwelt von Späthumanismus bis zur Aufklärung*, Basel-Stuttgart, 1956; Hans Rudolf *Guggisberg*, *Sebastian Castellio 1515–1563. Humanist und Verteidiger der religiösen Toleranz im konfessionellen Zeitalter*, Göttingen, 1997; Carla *Gallicet Cavvetti*, *Il testamento dottrinale di Sebastiano Castellion e l'evoluzione razionalistica del suo pensiero*, Milano, 2005.

³ Ernst *Bizer*, *Studien zur Geschichte des Abendmahlsstreits im 16. Jahrhundert*, Gütersloh, 1940; Brian Albert *Gerrish*, *Discerning the Body: Sign and Reality in Luther's Controversy with the Swiss*, in: «*Journal of Religion*» 68 (1988), 377–395.

⁴ Among many discussions of Zwingli's sacramental theology and its relation to Luther see the most substantial study of Walther *Köhler*, *Zwingli und Luther in ihrem Streit über das Abendmahl nach seinen politischen und religiösen Beziehungen*, II Bände, Gütersloh, 1953.

often considered not so original⁵, as it intended to look at the *Consensus Tigurinus*⁶ as a dangerous restriction of the religious freedom announced at the beginning of the Reformation⁷. A different interpretation is possible, however, if we consider the section *De Coena Domini* in its substantial connection with the theme of the *Beneficium Christi*. In addition to quoting the formal exegetical method and the spiritual interpretation defined by Zwingli, Castellio proposes a new theoretical solution, that is widely divergent from the one offered by the Zurich theologian. In particular, the latter's famous identification between the Eucharistic *manducatio* and the faith is denied by Castellio on the basis of a different Christological model.

Certainly this is a nuanced change, which *De Arte Dubitandi* does not develop systematically. It reveals, however, a clear difference of theological approach which stems from a brief confrontation with the pages of *De vera et falsa religione commentarius* dedicated to the same topic. This double movement in the formal quotation⁸ of and theoretical confrontation with Zwingli⁹ substantiates the peculiarities and, at the same time, the active role – as opposed to a servile repetition – of Castellio's understanding of the Holy Supper in the contemporary theological debate. The following pages are dedicated to this analysis.

⁵ That argues E. Feist in *Castellio, De Arte Dubitandi*, 172, footnote 12: «This part of the chapter is not very original. Castellio follows Zwingli and Oecolampadius.»

⁶ See, for example, Ulrich Gäbler, *Das Zustandekommen des Consensus Tigurinus im Jahre 1549*, «Theologische Literaturzeitung» 104/5 (1979), 321–332; Paul Rorem, *The «Consensus Tigurinus» (1549). Did Calvin compromise?* in: *Calvinus Sacrae Scripturae Professor. Proceedings of the International Congress of Calvin Research*, Wilhelm H. Neuser (Ed.), Grand Rapids, 1994, 72–90; Wim Janse, *Calvin's Eucharistic Theology: Three Dogma-Historical Observations*, in: *Calvinus sacramentum literarum interpres. Papers of the International Congress on Calvin Research*, Herman J. Selderhuis (Ed.), Göttingen 2008, 37–69.

⁷ *Cantimori*, *Eretici italiani del Cinquecento*, 91–92. For a detailed description of Castellio's Eucharistic doctrine and its relation to other views, in particular to Ochino's one, see Marco Bracali, *Aspetti «radicali» del dibattito eucaristico nel '500: Castellione e Ochino*, in: «Rivista di storia della filosofia» 4/2000, 565–586.

⁸ Castellio seldom declares the authors to whom he refers both as target of his confutation and as source of his work. As regards Zwingli, he never quotes him openly so that we can only suppose, the Savoyard humanist used him as sources of his Eucharistic doctrine. Even so, the similarity between the two authors of exegetical method and spiritual interpretation seems to attest that Castellio knew at least Zwingli's *De vera et falsa religione commentarius*.

⁹ Zwingli's understanding of the sacraments develops a notable change during his more mature years by rejecting that the sacraments confirm faith, as he had held in his earlier works. See W. Peter Stephens, *The Theology of Huldrych Zwingli*, Oxford, 1986; W. Peter Stephens, *The Soteriological Motive in Eucharistic Controversy*, in: Willem Van't Spijker (Ed.), *Calvin: Erbe und Auftrag*, Kampen, 1991, 203–213. This change in Zwingli's theology is not discussed in these pages which refer only to his early works, in particular to *De vera et falsa religione commentarius*.

1) *Figurata locutio in the Holy Scriptures*

In the part of Zwingli's *Commentarius* devoted to the Holy Supper, the author founded a new and - in his eyes - more correct understanding of the mystery of the Eucharist by directly taking a different approach to the text of the Gospel, whose literal interpretation had supported a dangerous doctrine: Christ's body and blood are *realiter* – bodily – present inside the bread and the wine¹⁰. In Zwingli's opinion this pernicious doctrine rose from an idolatrous persuasion that every single word of the sacred text, as God's word, was absolutely clear and therefore indubitable in its grammatical meaning. On the contrary, the Zurich theologian observed how the words in the Holy Scriptures were often de-contextualized and inserted into other contexts where – according to the whole *modus argomentandi* of the Hebrews – they assumed a much more extensive meaning than the original one¹¹. Similarly, Christ announced its mysteries and described his divine essence using apparently unsuitable terms or obscure similarities whenever interpreted literally, but which are able to introduce into a much higher truth if explained in a figurative way. This disparity between the literal plane and the spiritual significance of the divine message characterised the Holy Supper in Zwingli's *Commentarius*.

A few years later, Castellio also found out that the source of all mistakes and intolerance was based on the inability to recognize the referential nature often characterizing the Scriptures and, above all, to admit implicit nonsense in a literal interpretation of the Holy text's similarities, that is of its *figuratae locutiones*¹². This is the starting point of Castellio's Eucharistic doctrine.

As in our «daily speaking we cannot do without metaphors and metonymies»¹³, in the same way, the Holy Scripture is often expressed through similitudes and should therefore be interpreted symbolically. For example, the expression «Christum induisse», wearing Christ, is incomprehensible in its literal meaning so that nobody thinks we should put Him on «sicuti vestem», like a garment. This *figurata locutio* instead incites the believers to acquire a nature similar to the one embodied by the Son of God, that is to say, a righteous nature, as it appears clearly from a simple comparison with the steadfast command in the Gospel to obey the will of the Father¹⁴. The comprehension of this passage as well as, in general, of other such similarities in Holy Scripture is not restricted to the literal meaning which is mistaken and gives rise to

¹⁰ Huldreich Zwingli, *De vera et falsa religione commentarius*, Z III, 784.21–786.17; see also: Huldreich Zwingli, *Ratio Fidei*, Z VI/II, 806.6–17.

¹¹ Zwingli, *Commentarius*, 797.

¹² Castellio, *De Arte Dubitandi*, 169–186.

¹³ Zwingli, *Commentarius*, 797.25–31.

¹⁴ Castellio, *De Arte Dubitandi*, 170–171.

endless absurdities. The meaning must be sought, *De Arte Dubitandi* concludes, in the spiritual truth, through a careful comparison with all the passages that express the same message in a clearer and surer way¹⁵.

This does not mean that in *De Arte Dubitandi* Scripture is insufficient or subject to arbitrary views; it should simply be considered as a historical and human production – imperfect – which transmits a divine and eternal message – absolutely perfect –¹⁶. The incommensurability between the planes is thereby overcome, according to Castellio, exactly by means of the *figurata locutio*, privileged expression of the saving Truth: it discloses to the reader a holy message that transcends the formal terms it is expressed with because, on the one hand, the *figurata locutio* bends the timeless divine Truth to the human expressive limitation and makes it understandable to everyone; on the other hand, draws this process of adaptation near to the obvious absurdity of its literal meaning and therefore adds the implicit reference to a different spiritual plane, pointed exclusively by the similarity. What happens, however, when the surplus of the meaning – spiritual – in comparison with the signifier – literal – is not recognized in a *figurata locutio* as in the case of the doctrine of the Eucharist?

2) *The absurdity of literal interpretations*

The main rationale for being satisfied with the literal meaning of the sacred text is based on the fear of converting the unchanging divine truth into the subject of changing human interpretations. Castellio argues – referring to opposing theologians – these people often fear the danger that the eternal Word could be distorted and subjected to the whims of readers and it seems, therefore, shocking if someone tries to seek additional meanings in the Scripture; from this point of view, the Gospel is perfectly clear and stable because it is able to impact directly upon the minds and hearts of the believers.

Quoting Zwingli once again, *De Arte Dubitandi* rejects this thesis and notices that these opposing theologians do not always conform themselves to the rules they have laid down. As they persist in asserting the bodily presence of Christ in the Eucharist, Castellio maintains, they should also accept the real identity of the terms in all those passages of the Gospel where the Mes-

¹⁵ Castellio, *De Arte Dubitandi*, 170: «Iam hoc idem in sacris literis, ut sunt foecundae, dicitur multis variisque modis, quorum partim sunt figurati, partim non figurati. At qui sunt figurati, ii per eos, qui non sunt figurati, sunt intelligendi atque explanandi, id quod neminem negaturum esse puto.»

¹⁶ For the description of Castellio's hermeneutics, see Heinz *Liebing*, *Die Schriftauslegung Sebastian Castellios*, in: Heinz *Liebing*, *Humanismus-Reformation-Konfession. Beiträge zur Kirchengeschichte*, hrsg. von W. *Bienert* und W. *Hage*, Marburg, 1986.

siah describes himself using various images, naming himself as shepherd [Jn. 10:11], door [Jn. 10:9], stone [Acts 4:11] or way [Jn. 16:6], vine [Jn. 15:5], husbandman [Mk. 2:19] or head [I. Co. 12:12]¹⁷. On the contrary, even these theologians do not carry their idolatry to that point and recognize that in all passages Christ is called in various ways «non quia re vera sint illa omnia»: these pictures clarify his nature and his mission in «similitudo»¹⁸. Accordingly, Castellio infers that these same theologians show, in this way, that they possess the means of judgement indispensable to identify the implicit absurdity of the *figuratae locutiones*' literal meaning; with the Eucharist being an exception.

In order to disavow this contradiction in the argumentation of opponents, *De Arte Dubitandi* clarifies the means by which every believer can and should recognize similarities and clarify their meaning in comparing them, as stated previously, with all those passages that express a similar content, but in a clearer way. This holds true for both the sacred and the profane texts and allows for abandoning the literal meaning and finding a symbolic one in which every absurdity disappears¹⁹, whenever a passage, if not interpreted so figuratively, is opposed to both senses and reason²⁰.

Senses and reason, therefore, become the best means to locate the mysterious nature of *figuratae locutiones*²¹ – Castellione concludes, formally agreeing with Zwingli – because both of them can never fight against faith²² and arouse *contra sensus*²³.

¹⁷ Castellio, *De Arte Dubitandi*, 174–175. Similarly Zwingli, *Commentarius*, 797.16–37.

¹⁸ Castellio, *De Arte Dubitandi*, 175: «Certe si verba urgere volumus, haec omnia et alia multa plura absurda admittenda sunt. Sin in his ad evitandam absurditatem admittunt interpretationem et Christum pastorem et portam et lapidem et viam et vitem et sponsum et caput appellari fatentur non quia re vera sint illa omnia, sed quia sit ei cum illis omnibus similitudo, fateantur idem et in eius esu carnis et potione sanguinis. Neque enim in hoc minor est quam in illis absurditas, si verba urgeas, et, si Christum fatentur, quamvis se vitem esse dicat, tamen non esse vitem, nimirum quia et ratio et sensus repugnent, fateantur et, quamvis suam carnem comedendam esse dicat, tamen non comedi, nimirum quia et ratio et sensus repugnent.»

¹⁹ Castellio, *De Arte Dubitandi*, 175: «Et omnino generalem hanc regulam teneamus, si quod dictum vel in profanis vel in sacris autoribus eiusmodi est, ut, nisi figurate accipiatur, manifeste rationi aut sensibus repugnet, id esse figurate accipiendum. Itaque interpretandum, ut cum ratione aut sensibus concilietur. Erit huius regulae ad multos nodos solvendos incredibilis utilitas.»

²⁰ Zwingli, *Commentarius*, 798.6–10.

²¹ Castellio, *De Arte Dubitandi*, 171: «Iam de quo agitur, videlicet de Christi carne comedenda et sanguine bibendo, utrum propria an figurata sit locutio, considerandum est. Figuratum esse evincit tum ratio tum autoritas.»

²² Zwingli, *Commentarius*, 784.31–787.40; in particular, 787.17–20: «Breviter: Fides non cogit sensum sentire fateri, quod non sentit, sed trahit ad invisibilia et spes omnes in ista confert [cf. Hebr. 11.1]. Non enim versatur inter sensibilia et corporea, neque aliquid cum his in commune habet». Similarly Castellio, *De Arte Dubitandi*, 179.

²³ For Castellio's clear distinction between *supra sensus* – divine mysteries which human senses

Starting from similar assumptions, both *De Arte Dubitandi* and Zwingli's *Commentarius* provide a critique of all those who profess an unreal transubstantiation or an incomprehensible consubstantiation²⁴. Castellio places, in particular, at the centre of his criticism the physical senses: they touch, hear, smell, taste, digest nothing but bread and wine so it becomes impossible to believe – as those theologians who concentrate on a literal interpretation of the Holy Scripture do – that these elements actually become the body and the blood of Christ, unless human nature is deprived of all its natural means of judgement and reduced to an inanimate stone²⁵.

The same conclusions are drawn, according to Castellio, through the testimony of reason that, firstly, attests that if anything entering the mouth can corrupt the spirit [Mt. 15:11], much less will sanctify it, or justify it. Secondly, if the simple eating of Christ's body assures eternal life to men, he would have offered it to all – as he is going to offer universal salvation – and would consequently have made marginal or unnecessary all precepts and, in short, the life reform to which he constantly encourages his disciples in order to reach the salvation. This consequence is, however, clearly unsustainable²⁶.

Holy Scripture too attests in many passages that eternal life does not spring from a bodily eating in the sacrament, it's rather the goal reached following the teaching of the Gospel in everyday practice; eternal life means undertaking that *habitus iusticiae* that marks the true believers by ethical behaviour. Salvation insured by Christ «panis vitae» is therefore purely spiritual and has nothing to do with the physical bread dispensed in the Holy Supper.

The truth of these considerations is finally testified, according to Castellio, by Christ in John's Gospel [Jn. 6:54–56] where he urged his disciples to eat his body and, as he saw them troubled, reassured them by clarifying his

and reason can not grasp, understand and judge – and *contra sensus* – absurd statements which senses and reason can not understand, but grasp and judge as illogical, contradictory –, see Castellio, *De Arte Dubitandi*, 62–65.

²⁴ Castellio, *De Arte Dubitandi*, 182–186.

²⁵ Castellio, *De Arte Dubitandi*, 183: «Atqui in Coena Domini nullus sensus miraculum esse iudicat contraque omnes sensus ullum ibi miraculum esse negant. Nam et oculi album esse vident et aures strepitum fracti panis audiunt et nares odorem olfaciunt et manus panem tangunt et palatum saporem sentit et venter ipse panem concoquit, denique nulla res usquam esse potest, de qua magis omnes sensus iudicent. Itaque necesse est, si velis homini persuadere ibi esse carnem, ut homini et oculos et aures et nares et manus et palatum et ventrem adimas, hoc est ut hominem ex homine exuas eumque in stipitem convertas.»

²⁶ Castellio, *De Arte Dubitandi*, 171–172: «Altera ratio est, quod, si nobis vitam daret esus corporis Christi, Christus omnibus ad vitam consequendam praecepisset, ut corpus suum comenderent. Itaque [...] omnia eius praecepta, quorum executoribus vitam pollicitus est, supervacanea forent frustra homini proposuisset arctam viam.» Similar argumentation in Zwingli who refers, however, not to Christ's *praecepta*, but to his Resurrection: Zwingli, *Commentarius*, 803.28–31 and 805.16–22.

intent and by reminding them that «caro nihil prodest. Verba, quae ego Vobis loquor, spiritus sunt et vita sunt»²⁷, bodily flesh cannot evolve into spiritual life, only the words of Jesus, embodied in his discourse, are life-giving, creating spiritual desire and life in the soul. In this passage lies the solution to any dispute.

3) Est *namely* significat

In setting the solution to a correct understanding of the Holy Supper in the sixth chapter of John's Gospel, Castellio quotes Zwingli in opposition to Luther who felt the same chapter entirely alien to the subject of the Eucharist²⁸. Zwingli, as we know even since the letter-treatise to Matthew Alber in November 1524, referred to John's Gospel [Jn. 6:26–65] and he compared it with greater accuracy to the intuition of Karlstadt²⁹ in order to interpret Christ's words «this is my body»³⁰. In a clear-cut departure from both Catholic and Protestant traditions, the *Commentarius* rejected both the bodily presence of Christ and his bodily eating in the Eucharistic bread or wine and, therefore, interpreted the passage figuratively.

In *De Arte Dubitandi* Castellio uses a similar process by analysing point by point the same pages of the Gospel, and particularly the passage «caro nihil prodest. Verba [...] et spiritus sunt et vita sunt»³¹. With these words Christ clearly demonstrated, in fact, that the invitation to eat his body and drink his blood is a *figurata locutio*.

As the Samaritan woman had not been able to understand that the water

²⁷ Castellio, *De Arte Dubitandi*, 172.

²⁸ For the text, see: Martin Luther, *De Captivitate babylonica ecclesiae* (1520), WA VI, 502–512, in particular 502: «Primum, c. VI Iohannis in totum est seponendum, ut quod nec sillaba quidem de sacramento loquitur, non modo quod sacramentum nondum esset institutum, sed multo magis quod ipsa sermonis et sententiarum consequentia de fide, ut dixi, incarnati verbi Christum loqui clare sostendunt.»

²⁹ Andreas Karlstadt, *Von dem widerchristlichen missbrauch des hern brodt und kelch. Ob der glaub in das sacrament, sünde vergäbe, und ob das sacrament eyn arrabo oder pfand der sünde vergäbung*, per Andreas Cratander, Basel, 1524. To this text refers Zwingli, *Commentarius*, 792–795. See, for example, Carl M. Leth, *Signs and Providence: a study of Ulrich Zwingli's sacramental Theology*, Duke University, 1992, in particular Cap. VII–VIII, 127–179.

³⁰ Zwingli, *Ad Matthaum Alberum de coena domnica epistola*, Z III, 335–354. Similarly Zwingli, *Commentarius*, 773–820, in particular 795: «Difficultas ergo universa non in isto pronomine <hoc> sita est, sed in voce nihilo, quod ad elementorum numerum adinet, maiore, puta in verbo <est>. Nam ea in sacris literis non uno loco pro <significat> ponitur.»

³¹ See, William Peter Stephens, *Zwingli on John 6:63: «Spiritus est qui vivificat, caro nihil prodest»*, in: *Biblical interpretation in the era of Reformation. Essays presented to David C. Steinmetz in honor of his 60th Birthday*, ed. by R. A. Muller and J. L. Thompson, Grand Rapids, 1996, 156–185.

offered her by Christ meant the Spirit in a figurative manner³², similarly the sixth chapter of John's Gospel shows how, after the miracle of the loaves and fish, many could only understand in a literal sense the words with which he named himself as the only true «bread of life» that is able to give eternal salvation: whoever eats it will live forever.

The revelation of the Christ as the living bread of God which was broken for humanity provoked unbelief and even the disciples found it difficult to understand and were offended by him. So Christ, «ut offensionem illam tollat», clarified his purpose and warned: «what will you think when you see the Son of Man going up to where he came from?» [Jn. 6:63]. The fact of his ascension will indeed remove any idea of a bodily feeding on Christ's flesh and blood, that will appear not only – logically – absurd, but also – ontologically – impossible³³.

Each single doubt and contradiction are easily resolved by the same Christ who immediately pointed out that the disciples were offended because they misunderstood his words, they showed an unspiritual attitude, namely one based upon material considerations. Of course Jesus talked about food that gives life; not a physical, but rather a spiritual life in accordance with the spiritual Truth he announces.

Itaque ad alendam hominis animam, quae spiritus est, nihil prodest caro. Atqui meum corpus caro est, itaque ad hanc rem nihil prodest. Et sane non comedetur, sed in coelum ascendet. Quid igitur vobis vitam dabit? Spiritus. Nam spiritus is est, qui vitam dat et mea verba de vita consequenda spiritus sunt, hoc est de spiritu accipienda sunt, quem ego carnis nomine propter similitudinem appellavi, quoniam, ut caro carnem, sic spiritus spiritum alit ideoque animi panis sive cibus appellatur.³⁴

Applying the truth declared in this passage directly to the Eucharistic *figurata locutio*, Christ defines himself as the bread of life «propter similitudinem» coherently with the comparison introduced in the Gospel according to John: as meat or bread or anything physical that nourishes and supports only the physical body, in the same way only the Divine Spirit, that Christ announces with his words, gives eternal life to the believers' soul, nourishes and supports their spirit³⁵.

³² *Castellio*, De Arte Dubitandi, 172.

³³ Equivalent to *Zwingli*, Commentarius, 779–784.

³⁴ *Castellio*, De Arte Dubitandi, 173.

³⁵ *Luther*, De Captivitate babylonica ecclesiae, 502: «Primum, c.VI Iohannis in totum est seponendum, ut quod nec sillaba quidem de sacramento loquitur, non modo quod sacramentum nondum esset institutum, sed multo magis quod ipsa sermonis et sententiarum consequentia de fide, ut dixi, incarnati verbi Christum loqui clare sostendunt. Dicit enim <verba mea spiritus est et vita sunt>, ostendens se de manducatione spirituali loqui, quo qui comedit, vivit, cum

On the basis of this similitude, Castellio is able to settle any dispute concerning the interpretation of the Eucharist. The synoptic Gospels provide, without great diversity, the same account of the institution of the Holy Supper: Christ took bread, he broke off some pieces, and gave them to his disciples affirming «hoc est corpus meum», «this is my body». In the same way, then, he took the cup of wine, gave it once again to his disciples saying it was his blood, shed for the new covenant³⁶. The hermeneutics of the Scripture and the clear truth transmitted in John's Gospel show the absurdity of this passage, when it is understood literally: nobody can deny this deduction on the basis of both senses and reason and the very disputes among theologians confirm it³⁷.

So, generally the *figuratae locutiones* conceal behind the literal nonsense a reference to a further meaning, to a spiritual truth. In the same way the true value of the Lord's Supper can be established only by clarifying the metaphor introduced between body-bread and wine-blood:

Iamque verba illa Coenae: «Accipite, comedite, hoc est corpus meum», sine ulla dubitatione sic interpretor. Quemadmodum hunc panem fractum vobis ad pastum porrigo, ita et corpus meum in crucem frangendum trado, quae res vobis sit pastui, hoc est salutaris. Morior enim ad impetrandam vobis peccatorum veniam, sine qua salvi esse et vivere non potestis, quemadmodum corporaliter sine cibo vivi non potest. Quod idem et de vino dico, quae imago est mei sanguinis effundendi. Esto igitur vobis hic panis imago mei corporis et vinum sanguinis.³⁸

Following the example of Zwingli³⁹, Castellio locates the center of the discussion in the correct understanding of the words «Hoc est corpus meum hic et sanguis meus»⁴⁰: they present no difficulties to the senses and reason when «est» is understood as «significat»⁴¹. Christ, in fact, affirms that as he broke

Iudaei de carnali eum intelligerent ideoque litigarent. At nulla manducatio vivificat nisi fidei, haec enim est vere spiritualis et viva manducatio.» Ibid., 509–512.

³⁶ Castellio, *De Arte Dubitandi*, 178. The references are to Mt. 26:26; Lc. 12:19; Mt. 26:28–29.

³⁷ Castellio, *De Arte Dubitandi*, 178–179: «Haec Christi verba sunt. Controversia autem in eo est, utrum verba illa «Hoc est corpus meum et hic est sanguis meus» proprie an figurate dicta fuerint. Ad hanc controversiam tollendam meminisse oportet illius, quam paulo supra hunc locum posui, regulae de figuratis dictis, quae si rationi aut sensibus repugnent, sint interpretatione cum ratione et sensibus concilianda. Rationi autem et sensibus repugnare haec verba, nisi figurate dicta accipias, quid opus est probare, cum nihil sit manifestius? Cumque id vel clarissime ostendant tot theologorum tot et tam acres de hisce verbis disputationes? Nisi enim ratio sensusque reclamassent, non magis de pane coenae, utrum is vere corpus esset Christi quam de asino, in quo Christus equitavit, utrum is vere esset asinus, disputassent.»

³⁸ Castellio, *De Arte Dubitandi*, 180.

³⁹ Zwingli, *Commentarius*, 782, 785, 791.

⁴⁰ Castellio, *De Arte Dubitandi*, 179 and Zwingli, *Commentarius*, 795ff.

⁴¹ Castellio, *De Arte Dubitandi*, 180–181: «Itaque, ut aliae huius argumenti explanationes, quia absurdae falsaeque sunt, nulla verborum prolixitate satis aperiri queunt, ita haec contra, quia

off and offered his disciples the bread to feed their body, in the same way he would shortly afterwards deliver his body to death on the cross so that he would feed them in a new and spiritual way because his own death is «salutaris», useful to salvation. Without his sacrifice, in fact, their soul could not live as their body could not exist without the physical food.

According to Castellio, the Eucharistic bread and wine must be understood therefore as a simple «imago», an image, a metaphor of Christ's body and blood or, more generally, the Last Supper was an image and foreshadowing of His sacrifice meant to obtain from the Father the forgiveness of humans sins: its meaning is purely spiritual. Castellio asks then, why Christ has recommended to His disciples to renew the Eucharistic ceremony?

4) *The commemoration*

As we have seen, spiritual interpretation of the Eucharist means, both in the *De Arte Dubitandi* and in the *Commentarius*, a clear rejection of any bodily eating through which grace is bestowed. In this context both authors blame the Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation as well as the Protestant consubstantiation for being expressions of groundless scriptural idolatry.

Focusing on the relationship between Castellio and Zwingli, it is evident that the first follows the lesson of the latter not only in the *pars destruens* of his reasoning – that is to say in rejecting the literal interpretation of the Scripture – but also in setting up the following *pars construens*, namely in conferring to the Holy Supper a new symbolic value: one of commemoration.

According to the Savoyard humanist, in fact, the words with which Christ instituted this ceremony show clearly how its function is primarily one of commemoration. In it, indeed, God's Son wanted the disciples and the believers to celebrate the record of his sacrifice, to honour the memory, namely, of his unrepeatable death by means of which he achieved eternal life for his disciples once and for all⁴². So, the sacrament does not confer grace, but it is a symbolic description of grace, of Christ's benefit already given⁴³.

apta veraque est, paucissimis verbi expediri potest. Si enim dicas verbum «est» in his verbis : «Hoc est corpus meum» similitudinis esse, explicaveris omnia.»

⁴² *Castellio*, *De Arte Dubitandi*, 177: «Huius autem beneficii memoriam nobis commendare Christus volens ceremoniam illam instituit, quam Paulus Coenam Domini nuncupat, qua cerimonia ipsius mors perenni religione usque ad ipsius adventum recoleretur.»

⁴³ In «The Sacrament in the Confessions of 1536, 1549, and 1566 – Bullinger's Understanding in the Light of Zwingli's» (*Zwingli*, 33 [2006] 51–76, see, in particular, 54), Peter *Stephens* stress how according to Zwingli «the sacraments are related somewhat ambiguously both to faith and to the Holy Spirit».

This is the credible, clear, simple truth, based on those assumptions that all factions can admit⁴⁴. Compared with the interpretation proposed in *De Arte Dubitandi* – and even before in the *Commentarius*⁴⁵ –, all Sophistic speculations, which focus on the real presence of Christ in the Eucharistic elements, are definitively overcome.

The Eucharistic doctrine based on a correct interpretation of the Holy Scriptures and freed from its fetters and sectarian fanaticism reaches the aim it was established for: it restores the tolerance among different opinions appealing to the simple truth expressed by the divine Gospel, and it recognizes Christ's unrepeatable sacrifice as the only means of salvation for believers who must remember it through the Eucharistic celebration. Yet, this spiritual interpretation involves, according to Castellio, a more precise theoretical settlement, which leads him to conclusions that differ radically from those suggested by Zwingli.

While trying to define which was the symbolic significance of the Eucharistic bread, Zwingli did not hesitate to identify it with the faith in the Gospel, so that the celebration of the Lord's Supper could be claimed to signify only the remembering of the unrepeatable forgiveness of sins granted to men by Christ once and for all with His death on the cross. Although up to this point, as we have seen, *De Arte Dubitandi* does not differ from the *Commentarius*, the latter thereafter becomes the target of Castellio's confutation: eating Christ's body – in the spiritual sense – is not equivalent to believing in Him⁴⁶.

5) Comedere not est credere: *Castellio's turning point*.

If we consider carefully the intent of Zwingli's interpretation, this seems to consist in the substantial equation between Eucharistic mystery and faith rejected by Castellio: the true object of the former matches, in *De vera et falsa*

⁴⁴ *Castellio*, *De Arte Dubitandi*, 180: «Hanc cognita, admissa tolluntur omnes offensiones, omnia disputationum dispendia, omnia absurditatum monstra, quibus ecclesia per tot secula vexata lacerataque est. In hac nihil absurdi, nihil incredibilis, nihil obscuri, nihil quod vel a sacrorum aut profanorum authorum vel ab omnium gentium consuetudine loquendi vel ab hominis ratione sensibusve discrepet. Quin omnia apta, credibilia, aperta, plana et caeterorum, quae citra ullam controversiam ab omnibus admittuntur similima.»

⁴⁵ *Zwingli*, *Commentarius*, 798.35–799.8.

⁴⁶ *Castellio*, *De Arte Dubitandi*, 174: «Similiter igitur et in sexto Iohannis capite occasionem sumpsit de pane loquendi ex eo, quod ipsum quaerebant Iudaei, quia de panibus illis ad satietatem comederant. Hanc ob causam ibi se panem appellat propter similitudinem, videlicet quod, quemadmodum pane comedendo corpus, sic Christo comedendo alatur anima. Est autem Christum comedere non equidem credere (sicuti quidam putant).»

religione commentarius, directly with the latter⁴⁷. In other words the «panis vitae» that Christ used to refer to his body in the sixth chapter of John's Gospel⁴⁸ was specifically faith in Him⁴⁹. Only true faith is the spiritual nourishment⁵⁰ in which the believers will find eternal satisfaction for their inner thirst⁵¹.

From this point of view, both for Castellio and for Zwingli, eating Christ's body and drinking his blood does not mean obtaining the forgiveness of past sins each single time, but, as we have seen, believing in his death⁵², which once and for all «valet ad omnia omnium exhaurienda peccata»⁵³. Yet, while sharing the first part of this Eucharistic interpretation, *De Arte Dubitandi* explicitly rejects the conclusion announced by Zwingli's *Commentarius*, i. e. its perfect and absolute equation between the words «corpus-panis-fides» and replaces it with the relation «corpus-panis-iusticia» instead. What does the word «justice» mean according to Castellio and why does he judge it more appropriate to replace the concept of faith as fundamental meaning of the Eucharist?

In addition to the simple terminological shift «fides-iustitia», the incompatibility of Castellio's and Zwingli's soteriological model – and thus a Christological one as well, because only Christ gives Salvation to his faithful ones – should be grasped in order to clarify their different foundations of the

⁴⁷ Zwingli, *Commentarius*, 775: «Tenemus ergo nunc ipso nomine, quid eucharistia, id est, coena dominica, sit nempe: gratiarum actio et communis gratulatio eorum qui mortem Christi annunciant hoc est: ebuccinant, laudant, confitentur ac unice exaltant.»

⁴⁸ Zwingli, *Commentarius*, 777: «Dixit ergo Iesus: «Ego sum panis vitae; cum audissent ergo Iudaei Christum dicere, quod panis, qui de coelo descenderet, vitam daret mundo, optabant sibi semper hunc panem dari. Iesus autem intelligens, quod sensum evangelii non caperent, exponit, quisnam sit iste panis tam vivificus, ut mundum totum possit vitalem facere et dicit: «Ego sum panis vitae. Qui ergo ad me venit, hoc est: qui mihi inseritur, qui me recipit, nullatenus esuriet». Quod autem hic «venit» pro «recipit» accipiatur, sequentia verba indicat «Qui me fedit, non sitiet.» Fides ergo est, quae famem ac sitim omnes sedat.»

⁴⁹ Zwingli, *Commentarius*, 776: «Operamini cibum, qui non perit, et alium non inueniemus esse quam Christo fidamus. Cibo ergo iste, de quo Christo loquitur, fides est. [...] Quaerere enim iubet cibum qui non pereat, et hoc nihil aliud est, quam operari opus dei. Porro opus dei hoc est, quo fidetur filio, quem pater misit. Est ergo cibus, quem quaerere iubet, fidere filio. Fides igitur cibus est, de quotam graviter per totum hoc capite [Jn. 6] disserit.»

⁵⁰ Zwingli, *Commentarius*, 777: «Fides ergo est, quae famem ac sitim omnem sedat. Sed quam famem, aut quam sitim? Animae nimirum. Fides ergo in Christum sola est, quae mentem satiat ac potat, ut nihil amplius desit.»

⁵¹ Zwingli, *Commentarius*, 786–790.

⁵² Castellio, *De Arte Dubitandi*, 165 and Zwingli, *Commentarius*, 779.

⁵³ Zwingli, *Commentarius*, 803–804: «Falsa ergo religionis est, quae docuit huius simbolici panis usum peccata delere; nam Christum solum delet peccata, quum moritur. Mortuus est autem semel tantum, ut tota epistola ad Hebraeos et Roma. 6. habetur. Semel ergo mortuus perpetuo valet ad omnia omnium exhaurienda peccata. Falsa est religio, quae docuit hunc panem opus aut oblationem esse, quae quotidie oblata peccata nostra expiet.»

Eucharist. Castellio's statement «comedere non est credere» can be understood, therefore, only in the light of its deepest theological implications.

In order to isolate the breaking point between the two authors it is useful, first of all, to focus on the respective model of faith to which they refer. As far as to the constitutive elements of these models are concerned, Castellio posits – in total opposition to Zwingli – that faith should not be understood simply as a divine gift in which salvation is given *sola gratia* to the sinner, but as the first step towards a longer and much more complex process of spiritual regeneration. More specifically, faith is realized essentially in the free human choice to follow Christ, in the courage to accept the challenge he embodied and, in so doing, by exercising diligence in order to obtain the knowledge of Truth and eternal life⁵⁴.

In other words, according to Castellio faith is not a «cognitio Dei» given as fulfillment of an ascribed justification that is, in his eyes, only nominal⁵⁵; faith is not «sperandarum substantia rerum, argumentum not apparentium» [Heb. 9:1]⁵⁶, but, rather, confidence, an act of human will⁵⁷, trusting in Christ known as the only one able to make sinners willing to accept his doctrine and to obey the Father⁵⁸. Faith inaugurates and supports, therefore, a behaviour that is consistent with what is believed, with Christ's Gospel, but does not ensure the final salvation which remains partly tied to the individual's good will⁵⁹. This ethically correct practice alone, which is always open to error and fault – since it is directed, but not exhausted, by faith⁶⁰ – allows for obtaining a gradual growth in real «iustitia», that is the true bread of life, «panis vitae».

To put it briefly, the different conception of faith in its substance – as a divine gift according to Zwingli, as a partly free-chosen confidence according to Castellio – and its purpose – necessary and sufficient reason for the Salvation according to Zwingli, simple beginning of the long process of ethical

⁵⁴ *Castellio*, De Arte Dubitandi, 52: «Est igitur credere dictis seu veris seu falsis fidem habere. Saepe enim non minus creditur falsis quam veris, id quod de sciendo dici non potest, quippe falsa quae sunt, sciri non possunt, at credi possunt. Denique fides Christiana virtus est, id quod nemo inficiabitur. At scientia quomodo virtus est, non video nec eam in sacris literis ut virtutem laudari comperio, nisi forte scientiae verbum alicubi pro affectu ponatur, de qua hic non agimus. Et, ut paucis absolvam, ubi scientia incipit, ibi fides desinit, ut, qui ante dixit «Credo», idem iam dicat «Scio».»

⁵⁵ *Castellio*, De Arte Dubitandi, 143–154.

⁵⁶ *Castellio*, De Arte Dubitandi, 93.

⁵⁷ *Castellio*, De Arte Dubitandi, 89–90

⁵⁸ *Castellio*, De Arte Dubitandi, 92.

⁵⁹ *Castellio*, De Arte Dubitandi, 52–53

⁶⁰ *Castellio*, De Arte Dubitandi, 126: «Non enim ita iustum reddit hominem Christus, ut non possit non peccare, sed ut possit non peccare. Quemadmodum non ita sanabat claudos, ut non possint claudicare, sed ut possent non claudicare. Ita fit ut quod isti propter eiusmodi delicta negant credentium iustitiam coram deo consistere male negent. Deo enim re vera iustus et est et habetur is, in quo inest spiritus iustitiae, etiam si quid aliquando delinquat.»

regeneration according to Castellio – illuminates the essential divergence in soteriological planes to which we must ultimately refer to in order to resolve the Eucharistic issue.

The shift in perspective adopted by Castellio in rejecting the equation «panis-fides» must be assessed from a more general point of view: he attempts to interpret the Holy Supper as a figurative representation of the complex change «ex iniusto iustum», of a slow transition – which is not reducible to faith – from the state of sinner, which generates death, to that of a just man, which ensures eternal life. This conversion, which is made possible only by Christ through him being the true bread of life⁶¹, consists in the accomplishment of his *beneficium* which is, as asserted in similar formal terms in the Reformation, twofold: forgiveness of past sins by the Father – the subject of faith – and award of the spirit of righteousness, of the *spiritum iustificum* – purpose of practice –. With the difference that, according to *De Arte Dubitandi*, both are unable to assure salvation without free human obedience and ethical engagement⁶².

To conclude, Castellio interprets the convergence between the Christological model and a soteriological dynamic, i.e. between the two benefits of Christ and their practical effect in the believer's life as represented in the Holy Supper. Eating the Christ-bread of life is not equivalent to believing in him, but rather is trusting his teaching, to become *realiter* a just man. Eating the Christ-bread of life means following the model he embodied even in his sacrifice, letting the «spiritus iustificum» he released in its second benefit bear divine fruit in human daily life⁶³.

⁶¹ *Castellio*, *De Arte Dubitandi*, 169: «Quoniam de Christi beneficio disserimus et de Coena Domini (quae est ipsa quoque Christi beneficium) graves sunt controversiae, dicendum aliquid de ea est.»

⁶² *Castellio*, *De Arte Dubitandi*, 177: «Hac igitur forma loquendi comedere Christi carnem et bibere sanguinem est eam utilitatem percipere, quam ipsae suae carnis et sanguinis precio (hoc est sua obedientia, quae tanta fuit, ut vitam pro nobis profunderit) nobis peperit. Est autem ea utilitas venia peccatorum et spiritum iustificus, sicuti supra de Christo beneficio disserentes demonstravimus.» For the twofold essence of Christ's Benefits, see *Ibidem*, 154–169.

⁶³ *Castellio*, *De Arte Dubitandi*, 174: «Est autem Christum comedere non equidem credere (sicuti quidam putant), sed Christi spiritum sive naturam (id quod fit credendo) comedere, hoc est ex iniusto iustum fieri, quae res animae est salutaris et vitalis. Ut enim iniusticia animam interficit, ita et iusticia eidem vitam dat. Christum autem appellare Christianitatem, hoc est Christi naturam sive spiritum sacris literis familiare est et nominatim Paulo [...]. Hic quod priore loco Christi spiritum appellaverat, idem posteriore Christum appellat et mox iusticiam, per quam hominis spiritus vivat.»

6) *Sermo verax and obedience: Christological requirement to the Lord's Supper*

Castellio chose to deal with the debate on the Holy Supper, as we have seen, because it is part of a set of issues – together with the Trinity and the doctrine of Justification – on which Christianity is torn by violence and intolerance. The *concordia*, the agreement among various interpretations can be achieved only by focusing on the simplicity of Christ's preaching and life.

In order to conduct the debate in a suitable way, Castellio clarifies the theoretical background on which it is placed and introduces two fundamental assumptions: the essential link between Eucharist and *Christi Beneficium*, on the one hand, and the identification of «panis vitae» with Christ's self, on the other hand. The meaning conferred to these two conditions sets the limits which allow for both an upholding and a critique of Zwingli's theorization.

The understanding of both prerequisites is premised upon further research into the nature against which Christ as the bread of life⁶⁴ is set or, from an opposite point of view, into the essence of the medicine which alone frees from the mortal food that spread death among men. The Holy Scriptures evidently show how this mortal food is the «sermonem mendacem», the false speech of the serpent who, in the Eden, tempted Adam to disobey the Father thus condemning him to guilt and eternal death. Following, then, the infallible rule according to which against each disease an opposite remedy must be used, Christ opposes to the serpent's poison his «Sermo verax», i. e. his truthful and heavenly doctrine that has a concrete and undeniable effect: it forces believers to obey the Father and so leads them to eternal life⁶⁵.

The food which is dispensed in the Holy Supper is thus directly identified with Christ, not as Man and God⁶⁶ – which remains to Castellio a *mysterium* on which it is not possible to make any judgement – but as *sermo*, as divine speech, as spreader of God's doctrine, as divine rhetorician, as doctor of the soul⁶⁷.

⁶⁴ *Castellio*, *De Arte Dubitandi*, 169: «Igitur quoniam coena nomen est epularum et in ea agitur de cibo vitali, quem Christum esse constat, ante omnia cognoscendum est, quo pacto sit Christus cibus homini eique vitam conferat».

⁶⁵ *Castellio*, *De Arte Dubitandi*, 169–170. Similar argumentation in Sebastian *Castellio*, *De l'impunité des hérétiques – De haeretici non puniendis*, ed. par Bruno *Becker* et Marc *Valkhoff*, Genève, 1971, 52–54 and in Sebastian *Castellio*, *Defensio ad authorem libri, cui titulus est, calumniae nebulonis*, in *Scripta selecta et rarissima*, Francfurti am Moenum, 1696, 413–479.

⁶⁶ *Zwingli*, *Commentarius*, 779: «Videndum est hic obiter, quod Christus nobis ea parte salutaris est, qua de coelo descendit, non qua ex illibatissima quidem virgine natus est, tametsi secundum ea pati ac mori oportuerit; sed nisi deus simul fuisset, qui moriebatur, non potuisset toti mundo salutaris esse.»

⁶⁷ *Castellio*, *De Arte Dubitandi*, 154–156.

In this way Castellio not only quotes the comment of Erasmus on John 1:1 where the word «Sermo»⁶⁸ was preferred to the Vulgate «verbum», but also recalls the well-known *Philosophia Christi* and its model of ethical behavior. All these elements are certainly developed and widely referred to several times in *De Arte Dubitandi* in order to describe the Christological participation into the soteriological process⁶⁹. Castellio goes, however, a step farther than Erasmus in linking this semantic clarification directly to the symbolic interpretation of the Holy Supper: the «panis vitae» is, in fact, the announcement of God's Son that alone saves the believers from the false and deadly serpent and constantly urges – but not forces – them to act in concrete and free obedience towards the Father.

This Christological model shows the genuine meaning of the key passage of Castellio's Eucharistic interpretation: «caro nihil prodest. Verba, quae ego Vobis loquor, spiritus sunt et vita sunt». Christ describes his spiritual message and mission explaining how it is not his body, but his words, his teaching, his announcement that is spirit and life. Christ-*Sermo* must be intended as the rhetorical persuasive ability, the heavenly doctrine which makes sinners change into true believers. This Christus-*Sermo* summarises and specifies the true, symbolic meaning of the Holy Supper⁷⁰.

Finally, in response to those who, by quoting the Scriptures, argue that Adam has been corrupted by physically eating an apple, Castellio underscores how, even in this case, a figurative register is used in order to indicate that the damnation to which Adam is condemned springs from his disobedience and not from the act of eating the forbidden fruit. The Genesis Text, therefore, confirms Castellio's theory: in the same way as the first man was ruined because of his rebellion, so the true believer can be purified and saved not by physically eating the body of Christ, but by obeying his teaching and doing God's will⁷¹.

Obedience is therefore the concrete consequence of righteousness, of the Eucharistic eating in human life as well as the concrete consequence of Christ's twofold benefits, that of trusting in Christ-*Sermo* and that of following the divine teaching he embodied. Yet, to Castellio this obedience is concrete, *realiter*, because it does not match the faith: it is related not only to the power of divine justice, but also to the reformed life that each believer

⁶⁸ Desiderius Erasmus, Evangelium secundum Johannem, I,1, in: Novum Testamentum, cum Adnotationes, LB VI, coll. 335–338.

⁶⁹ For Castellio's debt to Erasmus see, in particular, the fundamental monographic study *Guggisberg*, Sebastian Castellio, in particular Chapters IV, V and X.

⁷⁰ Castellio, *De Arte Dubitandi*, 170: «Affert igitur Christus homini vitam verace illo sermone suo, dum eo sermone persuadet homini, ut veritati obediat, cui obediendo vitam consequatur, sicut Adamus contra mendacio obediendo mortem sibi conflavit.»

⁷¹ Ibid.

puts into practice. This spiritual interpretation introduces a wider value than that of faith, as for Zwingli's understanding, and thus gains a new dimension of reality.

7) *Spiritual manducatio and Justice: the spiritual reality of the Last Supper*

On the basis of these Christological assumptions it is finally possible to clarify why Castellio argues against the identity between bread and faith, as proposed by Zwingli, and suggests a different understanding of the Eucharist where «cibum homini vitalem esse Christianam iusticiam et Christum comedere esse aliud nihil quam Christianitate comedere, hoc est Christianum sive iustum fieri», the vital food is Christian righteousness and eating Christ means eating his righteousness, i. e. becoming Christian, a righteous man⁷².

In Castellio's opinion, the shift runs from the purely spiritual level of faith to the real one – but it is still spiritual, and therefore irreconcilable with the mere physicality of bread and wine – related to the ethical experience to which every believer should daily devote himself/herself, according to the example of obedience offered by Christ. Christian righteousness is dispensed as vital food in the Eucharist, and that explains to believers «quo pacto Christum in spiritu et veritate, hoc est spiritualiter et vere comedat», the way Christ is eaten in spirit and truth⁷³. According to Castellio, faith is useful but not sufficient to this aim: its being equated to the bread of life restricts the Eucharist into purely spiritual terms and makes believers passive with regard to the Soteriological way.

Castellio seems to find in this way his personal solution to the Eucharistic debate by reconciling Zwingli's spiritual interpretation with a new understanding of its reality in the concept of righteousness. Firstly, *De Arte Dubitandi* bases its original proposal on a specification of terminology: in the sacred texts the term «comedi res», eating something, is often used as a synonym for «cuius fructus comeditur aut a qua utilitas percipitur», enjoying the benefit of what, for similarity, is eaten⁷⁴. In other words, the figured sense that was previously established to be sought in order to clarify Christ's invitation to his disciples to eat his body is now understood as an exhortation to take maximum utility from his teaching.

Hac igitur forma loquendi comedere Christi carnem et bibere sanguinem est eam utilitatem percipere, quam ipse suae carnis et sanguinis precio (hoc est sua obedientia, quae tanta fuit, ut vitam pro nobis profuderit) nobis peperit. Est autem ea

⁷² Castellio, *De Arte Dubitandi*, 174.

⁷³ Castellio, *De Arte Dubitandi*, 186.

⁷⁴ Castellio, *De Arte Dubitandi*, 177.

utilitas venia peccatorum et spiritus iustificus, sicuti supra de Christo beneficio disserentes demonstravimus. Huius autem beneficii memoriam nobis commendare Christus volens ceremoniam illa instituit, [...]. Est autem sciendum non esse idem Christi corpus comedere, hoc est Christianum sive iustum fieri, et eius mortis memoriam hac ceremonia celebrare.⁷⁵

In summary, according to the way Scripture is often expressed, eating the body and drinking the blood of Christ means to perceive and achieve – «percipere»⁷⁶ – the benefit – «utilitatem» – which he obtained for us with his sacrifice, namely, to perceive by faith and then achieve through a personal engagement the two benefits he gives: the forgiveness of past sins for which believers must trust as a *conditio sine qua non* of the salvation that is possible *and* the bestowal of the «spiritum iustificum», the Spirit that makes righteous, that guides but does not fix human ethical behavior⁷⁷. The link between both of these benefits of Christ is the criterion to grasp Castello's original contribution in comparison with Zwingli.

As we have seen in regard to faith, for Castello as well the spiritual righteousness offered by Christ is not merely a free gift of God, untied from human will and donated with the «fides-cognitio Dei», but it is also a reward that the true believer must deserve because of the effort of pursuing concrete obedience⁷⁸. Spiritual righteousness, *iustitia*, is the goal that the believer has to conquer supported by *spiritus iustificum* in a daily fight against the temptation of evil and the weakness of the flesh⁷⁹. Spiritual righteousness is, in short, both human obedience and divine assistance, free moral praxis and obeying Christ's teaching⁸⁰.

The last reason for the refusal of Zwingli equating bread of life with faith «panis vitae-fides» is now clear: reducing the first to the second means, according to Castello, denying the worth, the real *and* spiritual sense of the Holy Supper; it means drastically minimizing the concrete fulfilment of

⁷⁵ Ibidem. For the reference to the description of Christ's twofold benefit, see *Castellio*, *De Arte Dubitandi*, 154–169.

⁷⁶ For Castello the verb «percipere», «to perceive» has a twofold meaning: as intellectual understanding and, at the same time, as concrete fruition. According to the definition in the *Thesaurus Linguae Latinae*, *Omnia per Caelium Secundum Curionem* hac nova editione concinnata, cum eiusdem praefatione, in qua & ratio huius editionis, & ut commode quis hoc opere uti possit, via & modus indicatur, Froben, Basileae, 1561, 4 Voll, Vol. II, 898–899.

⁷⁷ For Castello's doctrine of Justification, in particular for the connection faith-justice in Castello's soteriology, see *Castellio*, *De Arte Dubitandi*, 143–154. A general, but useful critical introduction to that issue is provided in *Buisson*, Sébastien Castellion, Vol. II, Cap. XIX: Castellion théologien et moraliste, 194–215.

⁷⁸ *Castellio*, *De Arte Dubitandi*, 143–145.

⁷⁹ *Castellio*, *De Arte Dubitandi*, 147–150.

⁸⁰ For Castello's detailed analysis of the cooperation between human free will and Christ's Spirit of righteousness, see Sebastian *Castellio*, *An possit homo per spiritus sanctum perfecte obedire legi Dei*, in: *Dialogi IV*, Gouda, 1696, 246–263.

Christ's benefits in human life; it means subtracting the believers from the responsibilities of their free choice for or against God and converting Christian righteousness into a fictitious justice⁸¹.

To Castellio, Zwingli shifts – but does not solve – the discussion from the bodily presence of Christ in bread and wine to the transcendence of faith: when considered sufficient to ensure the salvation to men, they both make Christian righteousness completely lacking of concreteness, i.e. of sense because they reduce it to just the necessary consequence of God's will. In this way Christian righteousness seems not to constitute a virtue in itself, but a mere proof of the grace received. On the contrary, in *De Arte Dubitandi* Christian *iustitia* is not a result bestowed by faith, but *the* – not *a* – Christian virtue: through faith the believer has the opportunity to really become a righteous man acting as Christ taught, embodying the Lord's example in himself.

In order to clarify how the recovery and rejection of Zwingli's thesis coalesce in *De Arte Dubitandi* or, more precisely, in order to determine the relationship between faith and justice in the Eucharist according to Castellio, it is necessary to briefly recall his soteriological model.

In Castellio's opinion faith and righteousness are not mutually exclusive: they are distinct but indissoluble moments of the circular soteriological process⁸². Faith – as complete confidence in the forgiveness of past sins obtained from the Father through the death on the cross of His Son and as trust in Christ's teaching – opens the way of salvation. Regenerated by the sacrifice of Christ, the sinner can not be regarded as a righteous man by the mere fact of believing; he must demonstrate concretely his progressive improvement in acting freely, he has to make good use in his daily life of the «spiritus iustificum», conferred by Christ, and the effectiveness of which in healing the soul is well represented in the Gospel.

During this process of real – because actually lived by the believer in his daily acting – and progressive – because developing in a gradual improvement during his lifetime – justification, true Christians strengthen their starting

⁸¹ See, for example, *Castellio*, *De Arte Dubitandi*, 132–133: «Quod si quis hanc quoque cordis mundiciam imputativam esse putat, nihil causae et cur non et ipsam dei visionem imputativam esse putet. Cum enim ipsius cordis oculis videndus sit deus, non nisi mundis videri potest. Sicuti lucem non nisi mundis oculis videmus. Quod si non re vera sed imputative deum videbimus, non re vera sed imputative beatis erimus: quandoquidem beatitas est videre deum. Ita fit ut dum isti omnibus modis imputativam, hac est imaginariam faciunt iusticiam, etiam beatitatem imputativam faciant.» In this chapter devoted to the Holy Supper, the target of Castellio's criticism is obviously the doctrine of imputative Justification, which this pages can not in detail describe. A general, but useful critical introduction to that issue is provided once again in: *Buisson*, Sébastien Castellion, Vol. II, Cap. XIX: Castellion théologien et moraliste, 194–215

⁸² *Castellio*, *De Arte Dubitandi*, 109.

faith step by step by renewing the choice to act according to God's will and they are supported in the commemoration of the Eucharistic sacrifice represented in the Holy Supper with the ecclesiastic community⁸³.

The link between Eucharistic celebration, the doctrine of justification and Christology is the final background of the debate. The Holy Supper offers in fact a symbolic representation of the twofold value due to Christ's sacrifice and of its concrete consequences in human life. According to Castellio, the merits of Zwingli's spiritual interpretation of the Eucharist must certainly be acknowledged, but they must be supplemented by a broader reference to the concept of genuine righteousness in place of that of faith. As we have seen, Castellio's personal contribution consists precisely in this integration.

Abstract

This article considers how far Castellio's Eucharistic doctrine is Zwinglian by reference to *De Arte Dubitandi* and *De vera et falsa religione commentarius*. In debate with Roman Catholics and Lutherans about the physical presence of Christ in the Eucharistic elements, both authors denied any real connection between the bread and wine and the body and blood of Christ and argued that «hoc est corpus meum» is to be interpreted figuratively: as the body cannot be fed by a spiritual substance, neither can the soul be fed by a bodily substance, so the bread of life, «panis vitae», dispensed in the Holy Supper and assuring eternal life to believers is spiritual food. Yet the breaking point between the two authors stems exactly from the spiritual interpretation of this sacrament: according to Castellio eating Christ's body – in the spiritual sense – is not the equivalent of believing in Him, as the *Commentarius* asserted.

On the basis of a particular Christological model *De Arte Dubitandi* relates the spiritual meaning of the Holy Supper to the effect of Christ's twofold benefit in the real, ethical experience to which every believer must daily devote himself/herself. The bread of life is therefore not equivalent to faith, but represents the development of the divine message embodied by Christ, his example of obedience, his Spirit of Righteousness which guides – but does not force – free human effort to obey the Father in daily life and gain salvation through right acting. The true spiritual meaning of Holy Supper is

⁸³ *Castellio, De Arte Dubitandi*, 177: «Est autem sciendum non esse idem Christi corpus comedere, hoc est Christianum sive iustum fieri, et eius mortis memoriam hac cerimonia celebrare. Hoc enim saepe, illud non nisi semel fit, et sine hoc servari homo potest; eius rei exemplum est vel latro ille, qui in cruce credidit in Christum, at sine illo non item. Itaque in hac cerimonia non fit homo iustus, sed iam iustus factus hac cerimonia fungitur.»

thus summarized in the word «iustitia», righteousness that means both the Spirit delivered in the second Christ's benefit *and* the human free obedience to the Father following Christ's example.

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