

Mysteries of the Altar

Book I. Sacrificial Food

The proposal of the poet (1-3)

Commentary

Lines 1-3, the proposal of the poet, tell the reader of the subject that Vondel will deal with in the three books of *Mysteries of the Altar*. Vondel opens with words which echo those of epic poems before this one: cf. Virgil's *Aeneid*, Book I, l. 1, 'I sing of arms and the man' (*arma virumque cano*),¹ and Torquato Tasso's *Gerusalemme Liberata*, Canto I, l. 1, 'I sing of pious arms' (*canto l'arme pietose*), although in contrast to both, it is not arms of which Vondel sings, but God's Mysteries of the Altar. In lines two and three, Vondel gives us the titles of the three books which constitute the poem. These are *Offerspijs*, Sacrificial Food; *Offereere*, Adoration of the Sacrifice and *Offerhant*, Sacrifice. Molkenboer² interprets the first of these as *H. Kommunie* (Holy Communion). I am not so sure this is helpful, for this is a term common to both the Catholic Church and other Christian traditions, yet it is clear from reading the poem that Vondel is concerned with arguing for the truth of the Catholic account of this sacrament, and arguing against other accounts of the Eucharist, particularly that of the Calvinists, which he tries to ridicule in ll. 800 ff.

Notes

2. Vondel uses the word *offerdisschen* to refer to altars and in doing so repeats the phoneme *Offer* four times in two lines (2-3). It is not unusual for Vondel to use such repetitions, which although they may seem clumsy to the modern reader, are clearly used intentionally by Vondel for emphasis – i.e. he is making clear that the main subject of this whole poem is sacrifice (*offer*).

2-3. The Dutch word *offer*, which is at the root of the three terms *Offerspijs*, *Offereere* and *Offerhant*, can be translated as 'offering', 'sacrifice' or 'oblation.' In the specific context of the Catholic celebration of the Eucharist, oblation may seem the more appropriate choice, but it has a rather clumsy feel to it and is a word which may be unfamiliar to some readers. So I have usually chosen to use the word 'sacrifice' to translate *offer*, but use other terms such as 'offering' as the context dictates.

¹ For a list of studies of Virgil's influence on Vondel, see the bibliography in the Vondel edition: Joost van den Vondel, *De Werken, Volledige en geïllustreerde tekstuutgave in tien delen*, eds. J. F. M. Sterck et al., (Amsterdam: 1927-1940), 10 delen en register. See also P. Dr. Maximilianus OFM CAP, 'Vergilius en Joannes de Boetgezant,' in: *Vondelstudies, ed. and intro. L. C. Michels* (Terheijden: De Forel, 1968), 3-88. Vondel also talks in terms of singing the praises of his subject in another epic poem, John the Baptist (*Joannes de Boetgezant*). In line eight of the first book, he writes *Het lustme van den helt te zingen* ('I rejoice in singing of the hero,' (i.e. John). See Vondel, *De Werken, Deel 9*, 687.

² References to 'Molkenboer', without further annotation refer to his commentary on this poem, which is to be found in: Vondel, *De Werken, op. cit.*, *Deel 4*, 652 ff. The text on which my commentary is based is an original first edition with the following reference: Vingerafdruk: 164504 – b1 A2 ene: b2 V2 tijt; Signatuur: Den Haag KB, 863 50.1, which is kept in the Special Collections Department of the Koninklijke Bibliotheek in The Hague.

3. Molkenboer notes that although Vondel uses the spelling *Offerhant* here, later, in *Bespiegelingen van Godt en Godtsdienst* (Reflections on God and Religion) (henceforth *Bespiegelingen*), IV, 957-8, he uses *Offerhand*.

Who seeks help from above (4-42)

Commentary

The poet now searches for inspiration with which to write his poem. Virgil addresses a Muse, probably Calliope, the Muse of epic poetry (*Aeneid*, Book I, l. 10), and Tasso also addresses a Muse (*O Musa (Gerusalemme Liberata*, Canto I, l. 9)). Tasso's Muse may be the Virgin Mary, or Urania (the Muse of cosmology and thus cosmological poetry), whom Milton invokes in *Paradise Lost* (7. 1ff.). Vondel does not invoke a Muse, but rather seeks his inspiration solely within the Christian tradition. He asks (line 5) what Seraph will purify his sullied lips and in doing so is making a clear reference to Isaiah, Chapter 6. Here, the prophet has a vision where he sees the Lord God sitting on a throne, high and lofty attended by six-winged seraphs. Isaiah recognizes his unworthiness and says 'Woe is me! I am lost, for I am a man of unclean lips,' but then a seraph flies to him holding a live coal taken from the altar and touches the prophet's lips with the coal and cleansing them of sin. The Lord then says 'Whom shall I send?' and Isaiah responds 'Here am I: send me!'³ Why Vondel would want to draw parallels with this story in relation to writing the present poem requires no explanation. What is worth noting though is that Vondel draws his inspiration from a story in the Old Testament, for as we shall see he considers many episodes recounted in it as mere prefigurations of the coming of Christ and the institution of the Mass, relegating them to a secondary position in relation to the New Testament and subsequent Church tradition.

Vondel continues (18-42) by deliberating on whether his poem will be sufficient to please God. In line 17, he asks a rhetorical question and in lines 18-20 three more. It is common for Vondel to write in threes and here he brings the first two questions together in the third. The fish he refers to in lines 19 and 20 is probably a murex, which belongs to the genus *Purpura* and from it Tyrian purple can be obtained, which was traditionally used to dye imperial robes, so together with the reference to silk, perhaps the point is that Vondel is saying that he can weave a poem fit for a king or emperor.⁴ This is borne out in lines 22-24 where he realizes he has no excuse to withhold the present of a poem from Christ, and there may be a sense of mock-humility in his reference to a 'meagre gift' in l. 24. It may be (ll. 25-27) that the ornament and richness that decorate the sacrament of the Mass are sufficient, but, surely, as Vondel goes on to say, there is room for a gift such as his poem, as long as it is a product of the heart. In lines 30-42, he acknowledges that he will be unable to write his poem unaided and so calls on the Holy Spirit ('Pentecost blessing,' l. 33) to fill his breast and enable him to sing God's praises. The idea of the spirit filling the poet and literally inspiring him to write this epic poem gives Vondel the chance to produce three similes which point to the idea that something precious may often be found in something less precious: l. 38 the clasp of a bible may be kissed at the celebration of the Mass, not for its own sake but for what it holds; l. 39 a precious ruby may be mounted in a metal which is not precious, and l. 40 shards of glass may 'contain' or seem to contain rays of light from the sun.

³ All quotes from the bible in English are from the NRSV unless otherwise stated.

⁴ See note to lines 397-400 below for a possible source for these references.

Notes

10. Tradition has it that the only animal which can look directly at the sun and survive is the eagle (*arent*). But Vondel tells us that the light of God which he sees, taking his lead from the prophet Isaiah, is too strong even for an eagle.

13. In Isaiah 6:3, one seraph calls to another ‘Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory.’ This three-fold ‘Holy’ is the Trisagion, which forms part of the liturgy of the Mass.

15-16. Gerard Brom suggests that in some sense these lines describe the poem itself. He says it is like a vast cathedral, moved by Vondel’s piety, which ‘in a vision begins to shake with all the spirals, into which the baroque columns, clouds and shrouds penetrate.’⁵ This of course reminds us that this poem is a quintessentially baroque poem.

17. Vondel referring to himself as a worm may allude to Psalm 22:6, ‘But I am a worm, and not human; scorned by others, and despised by the people.’ Despite this self-deprecation, Vondel does manage to answer his own question by referring to a silk-worm. *Offerweb* has the sense of both a web, or intricate poem, on sacrifice, and a sacrifice to Christ, the Bethlehem King of line 23.⁶ It is one of the many neologisms that Vondel coins in this and other poetry.

26. Vondel uses three words one after the other for the purpose of emphasis. Similarly in lines 38-40, he begins each line with *zo* to make his point to the reader. Gerard Brom makes the point that Vondel puts Jesus’ name in capital letters to show that he worships and adores Christ no less than anyone else in the Netherlands.⁷ This may be so, though I should note that he does not reserve capital letters for Christ: he also uses them for Jacob Boonen (line 43) to whom he dedicates the poem, and Pope Urban VIII in lines 687 and 1063.

Dedication to the Archbishop of Mechelen (43-54)

Commentary

Vondel chose to dedicate this poem to Monsignor Jacob Boonen. He was born in Antwerp in 1573, became bishop of Ghent in 1617 and metropolitan archbishop of Mechelen in 1621. He died in Brussels in 1655 and is buried in St. Rombout’s Cathedral, Mechelen.⁸

⁵ Dutch: [*die*] in een vizioen begint te trillen met al de spiralen, waarin de barok zuilen en wolken en sluiers omhoog dringt. Gerard Brom, *Vondels Geloof* (Amsterdam: De Spieghel, 1935), 243-4.

⁶ Frans Kellendonk offers further reflections on Vondel’s use of this term in his *Geschilderd Eten* (Amsterdam: Martinus Nijhoff, 1988), 18ff.

⁷ *ibid.*, 247.

⁸ For a good account of Boonen’s career and his relationship to Vondel, see W. M. Frijns, *Vondel en de Moeder Gods*, 2nd ed. (Bilthoven: H. Nelissen, 1948), 383-7, and for a good overview of literature on Boonen, see L. Ceysens, ‘Jacques Boonen face au laxisme pénitentiel,’ in: *Société des amis de Port-Royal*, 9 (1958), 9-51, at 9, n. 1. Boonen was Rome’s representative for the *Missio Hollandica* and would, in theory, have been responsible for the whole of the church province of the Netherlands at this time (*Gansch Nederlant*, 45). However, whether this was the case in practice is open to question, even as the Eighty Years War was drawing to a close, which may be why Molkenboer casts doubt on the phrase *Gansch Nederlant* in his commentary. Frijns also notes (384-5) that Boonen was known as a stout defender of the Holy Sacrament and that St. John was his patron (393), which, although they may not have been in Vondel’s mind when he was considering whom he should dedicate his poem to, certainly add to his suitability for this honour.

Molkenboer writes that he confirmed Vondel's daughter, Anna.⁹ In response to having this poem dedicated to him, Boonen sent Vondel a letter of thanks and a painting. However, in his biography of Vondel, Geeraardt Brandt records that Vondel initial delight at such a gift turned sour when he was informed by art experts that the painting was just a copy. Vondel sent the painting to his sister, Katharina van den Vondel, in Hoorn as he did not want to look at it again.¹⁰ Boonen himself was accused of having sympathies with Jansenism which takes its name from the Bishop of Ieper (Ypres) Cornelis Jansen (1585-1638). Such accusations were, according to Molkenboer, unfounded and for Vondel the root of the accusations was Envy (*Nijdigheit*) (line 43).

Notes

45. This line seems to suggest that at this time, i.e. 1645, Monsignor Boonen had oversight over the seventeen provinces of the Low Countries, including the seven provinces which were still at this point in the process of breaking away from Spanish rule (independence had *de facto* been secured, but this was not recognized officially until the Treaty of Münster in 1648). Both Jac. Zeij (9) and Molkenboer, though, cast doubt over whether this was the case.

47. Vondel seems to be self-effacing here, as is often the case, referring to his work as 'my trumpets' and questioning whether they are worth listening to.

54. Compare the preface of Carel van Mander's *Schilder-boek* (1604), in which he writes *Wie met verstant berispt, doet datmen voordeel heeft* ('Whoever understands and rebukes, does so to the advantage of others').

Introduction, drawn from man's destitution, which sprouted from the prohibition concerning the tree of life and the fruit of immortality (55-67)

Commentary

In this section and the next, Vondel recalls the pattern of the Fall and man's subsequent search for salvation. The Fall was the result of Adam and Eve eating the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil in the Garden of Eden, cf. Milton's 'first disobedience,'¹¹ after which Adam and Eve were expelled from the Garden and cherubim and a flaming sword guarded it (Genesis 3). Vondel writes that after his expulsion, Adam lived 'for a number of centuries.' Molkenboer points to Genesis 5:3, where it says he lived 130 years, but two verses later, we learn Adam lived until he was 930 years old. But, of course, according to Christian tradition, the Fall did not just affect Adam but the whole human race, through original sin, something which Vondel reminds us of in line 61. However, Vondel's main purpose here is not to merely reiterate a well-known Christian doctrine, but to point to the place of food in this scheme. In the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve could eat the fruit of the tree of life (Genesis 2:9;16), the 'heavenly fruit // that promises body and soul immortality'

⁹ See also Brom (1935), *op. cit.*, 238.

¹⁰ Geeraardt Brandt, *Het Leven van Joost van den Vondel*, eds. Marieke M. van Oostrom et al. (Amsterdam: Querido, 1986) 53. See also, J. F. M. Sterck, 'Eenige Notarieele Akten Betreffende Vondel en Zijn Familie,' in: *Vondel-kroniek I, June-Dec. 1930*, 23-32, at 26, and J. Melles (*Joost van den Vondel: De geschiedenis van zijn leven, intro. P J H Vermeeren* (Utrecht: Kemink en Zoon, 1957), 117 f.), who casts some doubt on Brandt's account.

¹¹ Paradise Lost, Book I, line 1.

(59-60). But, now after their expulsion, they could no longer eat this fruit, but only perishable food (56). The tragedy of this is emphasized in line 66: ‘One bite from an apple could ruin body and soul.’ From here until line 384, when St. John appears in the poem, Vondel recalls examples of prefigurations of the only food that can compare to the fruit from the tree of life, now denied us, which is the body and blood of Christ, of which, according to Catholic Eucharistic doctrine, the faithful partake during the celebration of the Mass.

Notes

62. The ‘natural fire’ (*’t natuurlijk vier*) is the sun, which eventually dried out Adam’s body.

65. One of Vondel’s most well-known plays is ‘Adam in Exile’, *Adam in Ballingschap*. This was first published in Amsterdam in 1664 and had the subtitles ‘The Tragedy of all Tragedies’ (*Aller treurspeelen treurspel*) and ‘The First Cause of Evil Things’ (*Prima Malorum Causa*). He probably drew his inspiration for the play, at least to some extent, from a Latin tragedy by his good friend, Hugo de Groot/Grotius (1583-1645), *Adamus exul*, published in 1601. Ten years earlier, in 1654, Vondel published another play, *Lucifer*, which as the title suggests deals with the fall of the angel, Lucifer. Much scholarly ink was spilt over trying to establish whether Milton might have read this play and whether he drew from it in his *Paradise Lost*, published in 1667. No firm evidence has been found to support this and it is likely they both drew from similar material.¹²

66. *Prima malorum causa*. The bible does not use the word ‘apple’, rather ‘fruit’. Reference to the fruit being an apple is, though, common in the Christian tradition.

66-67. The first word in each line is *Een*. It is not clear from the text whether this means ‘one’ (*één* in modern Dutch) or ‘a’ (*een*). One, which emphasizes the point, seems to work better, but the evidence is not conclusive.

*For which reason man, after the fall, seeks salvation and help, and is taught and consoled ...
by Pictures, Prophecies and Promises (68-78)*

Commentary

Driven from ‘the first state of innocence’ (75), Vondel tells us that after being expelled from the Garden of Eden, man was forced to seek the food of salvation elsewhere. The answer, Vondel tells us, was to be found by observing where the hands (of the prophets of the Old Testament) (73) were pointing to, i.e. to the ‘right fruit’ (74) of Christ’s flesh and blood that can feed the whole world. The fact that he does not spell this out at this point, but rather alludes to Christ’s flesh and blood as the ‘right fruit’ adds to the sense in which at this stage man is only left with prefigurations.

Notes

68. Molkenboer tells us that according to Catholic doctrine, as a result of original sin, man lost not only the God’s favour and friendship, but his nature was also wounded by ignorance

¹² For a recent edition of *Adam in Ballingschap*, see Joost van den Vondel, *Lucifer, Adam in Ballingschap, of Aller treurspeelen treurspel, Noah, of Ondergang der eerste wereld*, ed. Riet Schenkeveld-van der Dussen (Amsterdam: Bert Bakker, 2004).

and weakness of the will, so that he tended towards evil and his body was also subjected to illness and death. However, this doctrine is not peculiar to the Catholic Church, but is also affirmed by other Christian traditions, such as the Reformed tradition.¹³ Clearly, Molkenboer is writing for a predominantly Catholic audience, and so of course is Vondel, but this should not stop us reiterating the fact that a good deal of what Vondel writes is not just peculiar to Roman Catholicism.

70. The search for a ‘medicine for body and soul’ chimes with Vondel’s use of the word ‘medicine’ to refer to the elements of the Eucharist elsewhere in this poem, e.g. line 1107, where he calls them *zielartsny* (soul medicine), a reference he repeats in line 1608. He also uses the term in line 90 to refer to a nobler medicine, which Abraham gets a hint of when he eats the bread and wine provided by Melchizedek. The term *tegenspijs* (antidote) in line 72 has a similar intent, to heal the wounds inflicted on man by Adam’s sin. In another epic poem, *Heerlickheit der Kercke*, Vondel refers to *een rechte tegengift voor Evaes slangespijs* (a true antidote for Eve’s snake-food).¹⁴

72. The forms *stercke* (strengthen) and *voe* (feed) are in the subjunctive, as they are in a purpose clause.

74. ‘The right fruit’ echoes ‘the fruit of life’ in line 64 and reminds us that for Vondel the bread and wine of the Eucharist have an equivalence to the fruit on the tree of life in the Garden of Eden.

76-7. Until the Mosaic law, man had to work on the basis of an innate law of nature.

77. Cf. Genesis 3:18. In the same century as Vondel wrote this poem, Archbishop James Ussher, in his *Annales veteris testamenti, a prima mundi origine deducti* (‘Annals of the Old Testament, deduced from the first origins of the world’), which appeared in 1650, and its continuation, *Annalium pars posterior*, (‘The later part of the Annals’) published in 1654, wrote that the world began on the nightfall preceding 23 October 4004 BC. Using the genealogies presented in the bible, there were about 2000 years between this and Abraham, who with Melchizedek, is the subject of the next section.

Melchizedek, a precursor in the state of nature (79-96)

Commentary

The first prefiguration of the Mass that Vondel adduces is King Melchizedek (*Melchisedech*) of Salem. In Genesis 14, after Abraham has defeated his enemies, Melchizedek, whose name means King of Righteousness, brings out bread and wine, blesses Abraham and says ‘Blessed be Abram by God Most High, maker of heaven and earth; and blessed be God Most High, who has delivered your enemies into your hand!’ (6:19-20). Vondel imagines this scene once more and, having blessed Abraham and his nephew Lot, offers Abraham and his soldiers bread and wine, after their victory. But, as so often, Vondel changes the emphasis of the narrative for his own purposes. In line 84, Abraham ruminates on what he eats, and so for Vondel he is not merely eating the bread and wine, but considering their significance. From

¹³ See for example Susan E. Schreiner, *The Theater of his Glory: Nature and the Natural Order in the Thought of John Calvin* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1991), 28 ff.

¹⁴ Book III, l. 640. See Vondel, *De Werken, Deel 9*, 879.

afar, we see what the significance of the bread and wine is as they point to Christ, a Prince and High(er) Priest (86). Abraham, the Patriarch, gets a hint of the fact that the bread and wine he is given by Melchizedek have some greater significance but he is not able to unravel this fully, so he departs. God will, Vondel concludes, tell us the full significance of the food and drink at a time he deems appropriate.

Notes

79, 81, 86, 87. These four lines contain examples of the alliteration of which Vondel is, as it were, so fond. In line 79, I have *gelijck gestiert van Godt*, in line 81 I have *wijn and weite*, which neatly yokes the elements of the Eucharist together, and in line 86, I have *van verre een' Vorst*, with the first two v's perhaps preparing us for the third, which refers to Christ, the Prince, *een heiligh hooft*, line 87.

80. 'The hero' is Abraham, who is with Lot, his brother's son.

82, 84. Abraham does not in fact gain this name until Genesis 17:5. Before this his name is Abram, but Vondel probably uses the longer version here in order to fit with the metre.

84. *erkaeuwt* equates to *herkauwt* in modern Dutch. The prefix *her* indicates that the action is repeated and is normally used to refer to the action of animals chewing the cud or ruminating. Here, though, it is used to refer both to Abraham's action of eating and to his ruminating or reflecting on the meaning of the bread and wine.

85. *Ziet* (Sees). There is very much an emphasis on the visual in this poem. Here, Vondel is engaging his visual imagination and asking the reader to do the same. A little later, in lines 90-91, he refers to Melchizedek as a *schildery* ('picture,' though it also means 'painting'). In the next line, he refers to Melchizedek as *'t Gedootverft beelt* (the primed canvas), as if he is at the start of a process which will conclude with the finished painting of Christ. I should note, though, that whereas such an image fits well with Vondel's schema of prefigurations followed by what they represent, i.e. Christ, the writer of the New Testament book of Hebrews has quite a different understanding of the relationship between Melchizedek and Christ (Chapters 5, 6 and 7), repeatedly pointing out that Christ is a priest according to the order of Melchizedek, a difference to be explained in part by the differing audiences of Vondel and the writer of Hebrews.

95-96. We are reminded that as well as being an epic poem, this poem is also a didactic poem (*leerdicht*), where the author in some sense feels he is undergoing instruction and is passing that instruction onto his readers. Molkenboer suggests that the 'first school' in line 96 refers to Vondel's time as a Mennonite, which he now looks back on as a Catholic and sees as 'untutored' in understanding the full meaning of the bread and wine offered by Melchizedek, i.e. as a prefiguration of the Mass.

96. The word *harssens*, which in modern Dutch is usually written *hersens/hersenen*, means heads (cf. German (*Ge*)*hirn*), but often has an informal quality and can be translated as 'conks' or 'nuts'. I have chosen 'loafs' here as in 'use your loaf' (from Cockney rhyming slang 'loaf of bread – head') to try and find an equivalent informal word in English, but of course this choice has the added dimension of referring to bread, one of the subjects of this passage. Such a pun might be more in keeping with the poetry of one of Vondel's contemporaries, Constantijn Huygens, rather than with Vondel himself, but in losing

something in translation in some places, one should try where possible to make up for it elsewhere.

Moses' first fruits point to something better (97-134)

Commentary

Vondel now moves on from the story of Melchizedek and Abraham to that of Moses, whom he calls 'God's mouthpiece' (*Godts vertolcker*), and the Israelites in the desert. As with the previous story, the point of recounting this episode from the book of Exodus is that for Vondel it contains prefigurations of the bread and wine of the Mass. In the vision that Vondel has of the Old Testament figure, Moses shows the poet the feast of Passover which lasts for seven days (Exodus 12:15), and during which the Israelites would eat unleavened bread. Vondel then tells us that Moses dedicates the first fruits of the wheat harvest to God (Ex. 34:22) and asks rhetorically what significance these might have beyond that which they are ascribed in the Old Testament. Vondel says that he cannot understand and this may point to the time before he converted to Catholicism, when he wants the reader to think that he did not fully understand the significance of what he now sees as prefigurations of the elements of the Mass. He then describes in detail the Ark of the Covenant held in a tabernacle and in which twelve loaves of shewbread would be placed on a table overlaid with pure gold (Ex. 25:23ff.) (lines 114-5 and lines 122-3). Only the Priests were allowed to enter the Ark to approach the showbread and they had to be ritually clean before doing so (lines 124-6). In lines 127-134, Vondel concludes this section by suggesting that the table in the Ark of the Covenant, on which the shewbread is laid out, points to another table, the altar of the Mass. The altar will sate the hunger of the spiritually hungry (129-30) and do so with food, which, unlike the showbread, is not made of mere wheatflour, but only has the appearance of it (131-2), i.e. it is the flesh of Christ. But as yet, in the time of Moses, this food is not available, but only prefigured in the shewbread. However, Moses, who did have a stutter, cannot tell us: we shall have to wait, concludes Vondel.

Notes

105. 'Heaven's mouthpiece' (*'s hemels tolck*) refers to Moses, through whom God addressed Israel in much of the Pentateuch (c.f. 97). He whispers to the (twelve) tribes (of Israel), for the full significance of the first fruits as prefigurations of the sacrament of the Mass is yet to be revealed.

107-108. Moses points Vondel to the tabernacle in which the Ark of the Covenant was housed, a full description of which is given in Exodus 26. 'Levi's hand' refers to the fact that those who assisted the priests who performed the religious duties for Israel came from the tribe of Levi. 'Aaron's sons' are the priests themselves (Numbers 3:6-10).

109. Winged cherubim made of gold were placed at each end of the cover of the Ark of the Covenant. (Exodus 25:18ff.).

110. The cover of the Ark, referred to as 'mercy-seat' in the NRSV and *verzoendeksel* (reconciliation cover) in the 17th century *Statenbijbel* was made of pure gold (Exodus 25:17).

111-114. The decoration of the tabernacle is described in detail in Exodus 25 (not Exodus 24 as Molkenboer suggests).

112. One of the central ideas of the Baroque was that art could outdo nature.

113-114. The description of the candelabrum, which persists to this day as a sign of Israel, is given in Exodus 25:31ff.

115-116. Only the priests were allowed to eat the shewbread (Exodus 29:32-33 (Molkenboer has an incorrect reference, giving Leviticus instead of Exodus)).

120. 'Dressed in pure snow.' The undergarments of the priests were made of linen, though a range of colours were used for their sacred vestments (Exodus 28).

122. The ordinances regarding the shewbread are given in Leviticus 24:5ff. The twelve loaves represent the twelve tribes of Israel.

123-5. Before approaching the table on which the shewbread was placed, the Priests had to be ritually clean and this including not getting drunk, abstaining from sexual relations and, something which seems to be Vondel's own invention, abstain from drink made from erica/heather (*heikruit*). This may well be because it is an aphrodisiac.

128. The reference to the altar that 'stretches further than East is from West' may, as Molkenboer suggests, point to Malachi 1:11, which runs, 'For from the rising of the sun to its setting my name is great among the nations, and in every place incense is offered to my name, and a pure offering; for my name is great among the nations, says the Lord of hosts.' This may be true, though, as often, Vondel adds his own lyrical voice to this conceit.

129. *Temlust* is word coined by Dirk Volkertsz. Coornhert (1522-90). It consists of two smaller words, *tem* (tame) and *lust* (desire), and refers to a moderation which tames the desires. It was also used by H.L. Spiegel (1549-1612) and subsequently by Vondel, in several places including here.¹⁵ Ziej (p. 12) seems to equate the term with repentance (*boetvaardigheid*), but I do not think that captures the sense of the word as Vondel intends it, which is close to the original meaning of the word as coined by Coornhert.

131-2. A reminder here that the bread to which, for Vondel, the shewbread points is the consecrated bread of the Mass, which is transubstantiated into the body of Christ. It is thus food which has the appearance of bread, but which is for Catholics such as Vondel substantially the body of Christ.

Excursus on the procession of the shewbread in Vespasian's triumphal march (135-168)

Commentary

At the end of the previous section, Vondel suggests that the Priests of Israel would have understood the significance of the shewbread if Moses could speak of it, but he could not, and so 'darkness falls on the veil of the tabernacle' and the 'sad sound of prophecized misery' is

¹⁵ For specific references in the work of all three authors, see *Het Woordenboek der Nederlandsche Taal*.

heard. Jerusalem was sacked by the Romans in 70 AD and it is clear that Vondel sees the rejection by Israel of the full significance of the shewbread as a reason, if not the reason, for the downfall of Israel at this time. Such a claim obviously adds to the drama and is made within a world-view which sees the Old Testament as a series of prefigurations of the New Testament and the history of the Church and as a story of how Israel failed to understand the full significance of what they were being given by God. Jews would of course see things quite differently. I should also note that at this time Calvinists in the United Provinces would also have seen things quite differently, seeing much more continuity between the Old and New Testaments. The question has been asked as to whether Vondel was anti-Semitic. In an extensive article, B. H. Molkenboer rejects such accusations.¹⁶ I would respond that on the one hand if there were evidence that Vondel was anti-Semitic, he would, unfortunately, not have been alone in being so, but on the other hand, from the evidence of this part of the poem, he clearly thinks that the Jewish religion of the Old Testament is a prefiguration of the coming of Christ in the New Testament and therefore to some extent inferior to Christianity and it may at least be that he shows a certain disdain for the religion of the Jews rather than necessarily for the Jews themselves.

In line 139, Vondel uses the dramatic effect of addressing the shewbread directly, bewailing the fact that it, along with the treasures of the temple, had been taken from the Jerusalem to Rome to be exhibited in the triumphal procession of Vespasian and his son Titus, who had led the destruction of Jerusalem. An unexpected story that Vondel weaves into the narrative comes in lines 150-151. Here, he draws on the writings of the Jewish historian, Flavius Josephus, who recounts that when the Roman army was destroying Jerusalem a mother was so hungry that she killed her own son and ate his flesh. Although this might point to the depravity of one of the Jews, the fact that Vondel places it directly after line 149, in which he says that in the prophecy the shewbread could still be seen from afar, may suggest that he is making the point that because the shewbread could only be eaten by the Priests, the mother was forced to eat her son's flesh, when she would not have had to do so if she could have been given the shewbread to eat in such desperate circumstances. This, as the reader will doubtless surmise, is in contrast to the bread of the Mass which is not subject to such restrictions. By 70 AD of course, Vondel would argue that the Jews had had the opportunity of accepting the message of Christ, which some did, but others did not. Further, the sacrament of the Eucharist had probably begun to be celebrated, though in nothing like the form in which the Mass with which Vondel was familiar came to be celebrated. This does not stop him, though, from making the point that the Jews had had the chance to accept the bread of the Eucharist, but had rejected it. In lines 152-3, he accuses them of abusing God's table and holy bread and says that by stamping on 'something more heavenly,' i.e. the Eucharistic bread, which for example the Jewish inhabitants of Capernaum rejected in John 6, they would live to regret their actions and be punished by God.

Having mentioned the presence of the temple riches and the shewbread in the triumphal procession, Vondel now turns to the Jews themselves who are paraded as the spoils of war through the streets of Rome. They are led (161-3) to the arena where they will be fed to the lions. Here again, Vondel takes the Jews to task suggesting that they have got fat on the flesh of the Passover lamb, whereas they had the chance, but rejected it, of feeding on the body and blood of Christ instead. Vondel concludes the section by recalling that the feast of the Passover was instituted (Exodus 12) to remind Israel of the time in Egypt when the Angel of death passed over the houses of the Jews whose lintels were daubed with the blood of lambs, and which killed the first-born of the Egyptians. He then accuses Israel of having laughed at

¹⁶ B. H. Molkenboer, 'Was Vondel Antisemiet?' in: *Vondelkroniek*, jg. 10, 1939, 85-104.

the misfortune of the Egyptians and seems to suggest that they have now received their come-uppance.

Notes

140. The Priestly city is Jerusalem.

142. The brook is Kidron, by Jerusalem, and the river is the Tiber which flows through Rome.

143. Rome stands on seven hills.

144. 'Wreathed with laurel' – laurel wreaths worn by the victorious soldiers on their return to Rome.

144-6. A triumphal arch dedicated to Titus was built by his brother, the Emperor Domitian in 81 AD, and it still stands in Rome today. It may be from this that Vondel drew this image. There are, though, no unicorns on the arch. Molkenboer suggests Vondel may be alluding to the medieval trope of Christ being represented as a unicorn, though the connection here seems somewhat opaque.

148. 'Aaron's garment' (*Arons rock*) refers to the Priests taken to Rome.

152-5. Here, Vondel contrasts the 'holy bread', the shewbread of the Jews, with 'a more heavenly bread', i.e. the consecrated bread of the Mass. He suggests that the Jewish rejection of the latter, 'heaven's blessing,' would have dire consequences for them.

156-7. In the Dutch, Vondel places four words beginning with the syllable *ge* (the past participle prefix) in quick succession: *gebonden* (bound), *geboeit* (fettered), *ge vleugelt* (hands tied), (*in ketenen*) *geslagen* (chained), which acts to intensify the meaning of these related words.

158. The ruminating of the Jews as they are led through Rome in chains recalls the ruminating of Abraham on the meaning of the bread and wine offered by Melchizedek in line 84.

160. The picture of the Emperor in his chariot is again depicted on the Titus arch in Rome (see note on 144-6 above). It is interesting to note also that having made it clear that the cause of the downfall of the Jews is their rejection of Christ and the Mass, Vondel ascribes God's wrath to an allegorical figure, Revenge (*Wraeck*), which is drunk on the blood of the Jews.

167. The Angel of death appears in Exodus 12:23-30.

168. Memphis refers to Egypt. It was the capital city of Egypt at this time, so is an example of metonymy.

168. The Dutch word for 'laughed' here is *loegh*, which is an older, strong form of the preterite. Nowadays, the weak form *lachte* is more commonly used.

The prefiguration of the Paschal lamb (169-214)

Commentary

In this section, Vondel devotes the first thirty lines (169-199) to contrasting the lot of Israel in the wilderness with what has subsequently been received as a result of the coming of Christ, i.e. the Eucharist, and more specifically for him, the Mass. In the remainder of the section, lines 200-214, he writes that all was not lost for Israel in the wilderness, for God heard the cries of the Jews and took pity on them. The Archangel Gabriel gathered an army of angels together and addressed them saying that they were to feed the Jews, who had now run out of food, thus setting up the next two sections, which recall the feeding of the Jews with quails and manna.

Vondel begins by continuing to recall the killing of the Passover lambs and says that he would lament their innocent bleating (169), were it not for the fact that they are precursors of a 'more tender sacrificial food' (175), i.e. Christ, the Paschal lamb. The advent of Christ and the institution of the Eucharist put the Passover meal of the Jews into the shade (178) and remove the yoke of sin from all people (179). He then asks rhetorically what people it is that will forget (the dark Kingdom of) Egypt and eat the Paschal lamb more than once a year (182-4). The answer is of course the Christians, and more specifically Catholics who will partake of Christ much more often than once a year, which was the frequency with which the Passover feast was and is celebrated by the Jews. But for the time being, with the Jews still in the wilderness, we are to save this question for later years. For now the Jews continue to live under the Law (187) and in the wilderness they come to the land of Sin (Exodus 16). This is a barren land which supports no life and the Jews begin to grumble to their leader, Moses, that they have no food. Fortunately for them, and for Moses, God hears their grumbles and responds. For Vondel, he does so through his angels, led by the archangel Gabriel. There is no mention of the angels in Exodus 16, but of course, there is reference to Gabriel in the New Testament, when he announces to the Virgin Mary that she was to be with child (Luke 1:26 ff.).¹⁷ Gabriel addresses a host of angels (201 ff.) and tells them that they are to assuage the hunger of the Jews in the wilderness.

Notes

173. 'His (God's) Mouthpiece' (*Tolck*) is Moses.

174-178. Vondel twice contrasts the Passover feast with what replaced it for Christians. In lines 174-5, he begins 174 with 'sacrificial feast' (*offerfeest*) pointing to the Jewish feast for which lambs were slaughtered and suggests that this is a prefiguration (under which is hidden) of 'more tender sacrificial food' (*offerspijs*), i.e. the body and blood of Christ in the consecrated elements of the Mass. In lines 176-8, he refers to the Last Supper, which took place at the time of Passover, and at which the Eucharist was instituted with the word *Paeschbancket* (Passover feast). The term 'feast' seems to have more of the celebratory about it than the straightforward Passover meal (*Paeschmael*) of the Jews with which he refers to the annual Passover feast of the Jews in line 178. This annual meal involved the killing and shedding of blood of many lambs, the bloody sacrifice of line 177, and this has been replaced for Christians by the Eucharist. Given that for Vondel and his fellow Catholics, the Eucharist is bloody, in the sense that the element of wine is considered to be

¹⁷ Gabriel also appears in Vondel's play, *Lucifer* (1654).

transformed into the blood of Christ, it is perhaps a moot point as to whether the Mass is ‘less bloody’ than the Passover feast, though we can understand the point Vondel is making.

185. A notable feature of this poem is the shifts in time that Vondel effects.¹⁸ In the preceding lines, there is a constant interplay between the time of the institution of the Jewish Passover and subsequent celebrations of this feast and the institution of the Eucharist. In lines 182-3, Vondel asks what people it is that forgets Egypt and celebrates a feast more than once a year, pointing to Christians, but then asks us to forget this question as he focuses on the Jews in the wilderness specifically. But even then, he continues to evoke shifts in time, by referring in line 188 to the ‘clay ground’ of the New Testament and Church history ‘slaked with dew, warmed in the sunshine of God’s grace’ in contrast to the barren wilderness in which the Jews now find themselves (see below).

188. The clay ground here, on which the truth (of the Eucharist) can be grasped, and which is fertile ground for plants, contrasts with the grassless, ‘never-ploughed’ land of Sin (191) in which the Israelites currently find themselves. This line also contains a nice example of zeugma, with the verb ‘grasp’ (*pluukt*) covering both the truth and the fruit of the truth.

193. ‘Six pairs of tribes’ are the twelve tribes of Israel.

194. The tabernacle around the Ark of the Covenant is not mentioned in Exodus 16, where we read about the Israelites in the land of Sin, but it is mentioned later in Exodus 25.

197. In the Dutch, the pairing of *verdroogen* (drying) and *verdorren* (scorching) intensify the sense of barrenness in the wilderness.

198. ‘Their Leader’ is Moses. We read of the moaning of Israel in Exodus 16:2.

200. The Spirits are God’s Angels.

205. Despite possibly being open to charges of anti-Semitism,¹⁹ here Vondel does affirm the Jews as God’s ‘chosen people.’

207. Here, we see a good example of how Vondel manipulates language to fit the metre and rhyme, calling the land of milk and honey, ‘*melck-en-honighlant*’.²⁰

¹⁸ Lowry Nelson Jr. and Harold Segel note that a complex time structure is one of the marks of Baroque poetry. See their entry ‘Baroque,’ in: *The New Princeton Encyclopaedia of Poetry and Poetics*, eds. Alex Preminger and T. V. F. Brogan (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1993), 121-4, at 123.

¹⁹ See commentary on lines 134-168 above.

²⁰ It is not clear which Dutch language bible Vondel would have used, though this may merely be an invention of his own. K. F. Proost discusses both which bibles were published in Dutch in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and Vondel’s use of the bible in his literary works in general terms, but does not venture to say which particular bible(s) he used (K. F. Proost, *De Bijbel in de Nederlandsche Letterkunde als Spiegel der Cultuur, Deel II, Zestiende en Zeventiende Eeuw* (Assen: Van Gorcum & Co., 1933). The *Deux-Aes* bible (first published in Emden in 1562) was certainly popular. Commentators seem agreed that this was primarily amongst the Reformed community (see for example C. A. Tukker, *Een verborgen schut in den Acker* (Utrecht: De Banier, 1978), and Proost p. 79, where he describes the bible as ‘*de Bijbel der Gereformeerden*’ (his italics)). Another commentator, A. van Duinkerken (*Vondel-kroniek*, jg. 4, 1933, 187), quotes Proost referring to the *Deux-Aes* bible as Vondel’s ‘handbook,’ though I cannot find any reference to this in Proost’s work and it does seem somewhat surprising that Vondel would have used this bible given his and its respective religious backgrounds (see *De Nieuwe Eeuw*, 837, 7 Sept 1933, 1804-5, at 1804.). Amongst Mennonites, who counted Vondel amongst their number in his early years, the 1554 bible of Mattheüs Jacobszoon was popular (Proost, p. 79) as

211. Hendiadys for ‘provisions of grain and meal.’

214. The Jordan was the river Israel had to cross in order to enter the Promised Land.

(The pre-figuration) Of the quails (215-224)

Commentary

Continuing with his invention of the angels’ involvement in helping to feed Israel in the wilderness, which may possibly have been inspired by reference to manna as ‘the bread of angels’ in Psalm 78:20, Vondel divides the angels into two groups (215-6), one going to find quails and the other bringing manna to the Israelites. He begins with reference to the quails. They are mentioned in Exodus 16:13, ‘In the evening quails came up and covered the camp,’ but as in each case in this section, Vondel both provides his own embellishments to the reference and sees the quails as a prefiguration of the Eucharist. He tells us (222) that the angels drove a thick cloud of quails from ‘the Arabian Lake,’ which is another invention of Vondel’s, with which he perhaps tries to answer the question of where indeed the quails did come from (though there is also a possibility that it is inspired by Psalm 78:27 (‘he rained...winged birds like the sand of the seas’). Before sundown, the quails arrive and fall upon the tents of the Jews (cf. Psalm 78:28 ‘he let [the quails] fall within their camp, all around their dwellings.’ They cooked the quails and ate their flesh, through which, for Vondel, the flesh of Christ shone (223-4).

Notes

222. Here, we see a good example of asyndeton,²¹ which helps to quicken the pace of the action: ‘They catch, they pluck, they roast’ (*men vangt, men pluckt, men braet*).

was the *Biestkensbijbel*, first published in 1560. The *Statenbijbel* was first published in 1637, though as it had been specifically commissioned by the Counter-Remonstrants whom Vondel bitterly opposed, one might ask whether he would have been inclined to consult it. Other possible Dutch language bibles are the *Liesveldtbijbel*, published in Antwerp in 1526, the New Testament of which is based on Luther’s translation of the bible, and the first bible to be produced in Dutch, the *Delftse bijbel*, first published in 1477, which is only a translation of the Old Testament. This may seem unlikely, but C. C. de Bruin points out that incunabula were held in Amsterdam, including in the Begijnhof there, which Vondel frequented, and Vondel’s contemporaries such as Marnix and Petrus Scriverius are known to have owned copies (C. C. De Bruin, *De Delftse Bijbel in het Licht der Historie: Inleiding bij de heruitgave A. D. 1977* (Amsterdam: Alphen a/d Rijn, 1977). For the *Delftse bijbel* and *Deux-Aes* bible, see <http://www.bijbelsdigitaal.nl>.

Most of the above are of course Protestant bibles, though the *Delftse bijbel* was clearly used by Protestants and Catholics alike. It is not clear whether Vondel would have continued to use a non-Catholic bible after his conversion. Again, this would be an interesting question to investigate. If he did turn to a Catholic Dutch language bible, then a likely candidate would be the *Biblia sacra dat is de geheele Heylighe Schrifture bedeylt int Oudt en Nieu Testament : van nieus met groote neersticheyt oversien, ende naer den lesten Roomschen text verbeteret, door sommige doctoren inder Heyligher Godtheyt inde vermaerde Universiteyt van Louen*, first published in Antwerp in 1599, based on the revised Vulgate. However, if we follow Molkenboer and Brom (‘Vondels Bijbel,’ in: *Studia Catholica*, jg. 5, 1928-9, 296-7), we should remember that the Latin Vulgate itself was a key source for Vondel in the writing of the present poem. Again, whether the extent to which he used the Vulgate changed over time would also require further investigation.

²¹ Alex Preminger et al. note that asyndeton was a figure particularly favoured by baroque poets, among whom we may count Vondel. See Alex Preminger et al., ‘Asyndeton,’ in: *eds. Preminger and Brogan, op. cit.*, 105-6, at 106.

(The prefiguration) Of the Manna (225-304)

Commentary

Vondel now turns to the other way in which God feeds Israel in the wilderness, the provision of manna. As with the reference to the quails, Vondel largely draws here on the account in Exodus 16, though, here too, he combines the details of this account with the products of his own imagination. As with each of the episodes in this section of the poem, he also sees the manna as a prefiguration of the Eucharist.

Whilst one half of the angels addressed by Gabriel have been ushering the quails towards the Israelites in the desert, the other half has been helping to prepare and distribute the manna. In the early morning (235-6), a cool wind blows around the camp and then the manna drops from heaven (230), turned to hailstones (231;246) land on the roofs of the Israelites' tents and they rush out to see what is happening. They ask 'What is it?' which in Hebrew is *man hu*? and it is from this that manna gets its name. In line 250, they see the field as if strewn with coriander, recalling Exodus 16:31, which tells us that the manna was like coriander seed. Earlier in chapter 16, we are told that the Israelites had been complaining about the lack of food. Now that they have meat in the evening, the quails, and manna in the morning, Moses feels he is vindicated in remaining faithful to the Lord, and Vondel has him cry out, 'Where are the rebels now?' (257). Now that the manna has been provided, the Jews can go out and gather it (262-4). In the biblical account there is a clear moral dimension concerning how much is to be gathered by each Jew, and this is reflected in Vondel's retelling of the episode. In Exodus 16:18, we learn 'those who gathered much had nothing over, and those who gathered little had no shortage,' which Vondel repeats in lines 272-3. We are also told that when the sun grew hot, the manna melted (Exodus 16:21, cf. 274) and that it could be baked (Exodus 16:22, cf. 275). Any manna left from the day before was eaten by worms and became foul (Exodus 16:20, cf. 276-7), but some was put aside for the Sabbath and this did not go rotten (Exodus 16:23-5, cf. 280).

Exodus 16:35 tells us that the Israelites ate manna for forty years and Vondel conjures a wonderful picture of the angels laying a table for the Israelites 'for many years before break of day' (293). But, as in each of the episodes in this section, it is not long before Vondel's thoughts start to see in this Old Testament story a prefiguration of the Eucharist 'something sweeter than a Jew can taste' (296). He takes his lead from the meaning of the word manna 'What is it?' and says that this asks him to enquire as to what indeed the true nature of the manna is. Whilst he is reflecting on this question, which will ultimately lead him to see it as a prefiguration of the bread of the Eucharist, he sees 'a stately figure', Elijah (304), coming along who invites him to enquire further as to the meaning of the bread.

Notes

225. 'The other half': see 215-216. Molkenboer sees the influence of Bellarmine here, who wrote that 'the manna came into being in the hands of the angels, and for this reason it is called the bread of angels.'²² This may in turn have been inspired by Psalm 78:25 'Mortals ate of the bread of angels; he sent them food in abundance.'

²² Latin: *Manna fiebat manibus Angelorum, unde dicitur panis Angelorum*. Robert Bellarmine, *Controversia de Sacramento Eucharistiae sex libris explicata*, 401C.

227-234. A lyrical passage of Vondel's invention, imagining how the manna might have come into being. The reference to 'honeydew' is probably inspired by Exodus 16:31, which tells us that the 'taste of [the manna] was like wafers made from honey.' In line 229, Vondel turns Gabriel into a magician, tapping the thyme, rose petals and lilies and thus turning them into droplets, which then turn to hailstones as they rained down on the camp of the Israelites.

231. They (zy) refers to the droplets which are then turned to hailstones.

233. The army is the Jewish people.

235. Compare Exodus 16:13 'in the morning...'

237-8. The Leader and his brother are Moses and Aaron respectively.

239. In 222 above, we saw an example of asyndeton. Here, we see its antithesis, polysyndeton: 'the lap and hand and sober mouth,' which nevertheless performs a similar role to asyndeton in providing emphasis and contributing to the rhythm of the line. As with asyndeton, we see plenty of examples of polysyndeton in this poem.

241. The 'celestial lamps' are the stars.

244. The Dutch for 'that rustling murmured' (*dat ruischen suisde*) both rhymes and has an onomatopoeic quality that evokes the wind.

245. *Een troostbo* (comforter) may well be one of Vondel's neologisms. It is not recorded in *Het Woordenboek der Nederlandsche Taal*, and only one reference here is made to *troostbode*, of which the former term is a shortened version. This occurs in 1856. It may be an allusion to the Holy Spirit – who is called *de Trooster* (comforter) in earlier versions of Dutch language bibles in John 15:26. A more literal translation of the term is 'messenger of consolation.'

247. In the Dutch, the hail falls *van dack tot dack* (from roof to roof), which again has an onomatopoeic quality recalling the thud of the hailstones as they hit the roofs of the tents.

249. The (army of) Jews shout 'what is it?' (cf. Exodus 16:15). In Hebrew, this is *man hu*, from which we get the word manna. An alternative translation of the Hebrew is 'It is manna' (see NRSV note to this verse).

250. The Jews saw the field as if strewn with coriander recalls Exodus 16:31 in which it is said that the manna 'was like coriander.'

251. Exodus 16:14 '...there on the surface of the wilderness with a fine flaky substance, as fine as frost on the ground.' 'Small and round' is suggestive of the Eucharistic host.

252. We are told in Exodus 16:14, that by now the dew had lifted.

253-4. 'Tasting like wheat flour and honey' recalls Exodus 16:31: 'the taste of [the manna] was like wafers made with honey.'

262-4. Vondel likens the Jews gathering up the small round pieces of manna to ants carrying tiny white eggs back to their nest.²³

269. ‘O bread that breeds questions?’ recalls the etymology of manna – the question ‘what is it?’ which Vondel refers to in line 249 – and also points to the fact that the manna asks Vondel himself to reflect on its significance, which will be revealed in due course.

270-1. The Jews measured the manna with an omer, which held a quantity equivalent to the volume of forty eggshells. It is the manna that sates both ‘the glutton and the moderate’ in 271.

272-3. I note in the commentary above that there is a moral dimension to the collection of the manna, such that no one would be able to gather and eat more than they needed or less than they needed. To accentuate the contrast, Vondel starts each of these lines in a similar manner: *Wie gierigh raept, behoudt...; Wie luttel raept, bevint.*

277. Vondel talks of the leftover manna being eaten by *its (zijn)* worms, as if the manna itself somehow generates the worms, which is maybe how it was understood in his own time.

278. There were two exceptions to the manna going rotten. The first was that manna kept for the day of rest, the Sabbath (280, cf. Exodus 16:23-24), and the second was the manna placed in an omer (‘golden vessel’) and ‘placed before the Lord’ in the holy of holies (279, cf. Exodus 16:33-34).

281. Cf. Exodus 16:21 and 35.

282. Molkenboer notes that the idea that the sameness of the manna day after day was alleviated by it being differentiated according to the taste of each of its recipients comes from The Book of Wisdom 16:20. *Vergouden* (here: endowed) replaces the more normal form *vergolden* (past participle of *vergolden*) in order to maintain the rhyme. It is the result of syncope of the l before the d.²⁴

284. ‘O incredible thing!’ (*o ongeloofbre zaeck*) echoes the phrase *o res mirabilis* used to refer to the Eucharistic bread in the Catholic tradition.

285-7. Molkenboer tells us that when a woman is pregnant, she wants to eat even the most revolting food. But the manna satisfies all her desires for food.

288-9. Again the food is differentiated so much that it can feed a wide range of animals, as well as humans.

291. *met eenen*. Van Helten gives this as an example of a common feature in Vondel’s work which is to decline an adjective, which has been substantivized (here *een*), in accordance with noun declension.²⁵

²³ Cf. Jac. J. Zeijl, S. J., *Vondel’s Altaergeheimenissen* (Den Bosch: Teulings’ Uitgevers-Maatschappij, 1924), 16.

²⁴ W. L. van Helten, *Vondel’s Taal: Grammatica van het Nederlandsch der Zeventiende Eeuw* (Groningen: J. B. Wouters, 1883), Vormleer 23, para. 33.

²⁵ Van Helten, *op. cit.*, Vormleer 109, para. 104.

292-3. No angels are mentioned in Exodus 16, but this does not stop Vondel from painting a wonderful picture of angels setting a table each morning for the Jews in the wilderness, and may draw on Psalm 77:25, where the manna is referred to as ‘bread of angels.’

295. The manna is referred to a *man* in Exodus 16:31, 33 and 35 in both the Vulgate and the Hebrew bible. The use of this form of the word here also assists the rhyme scheme and metre.

295-8. Here, Vondel’s thoughts clearly turn to the Eucharistic host, which like the manna, is a white disc (297). He asks what the significance of the manna is, recalling its etymology (see 249 and 269 above).

300. Vondel here uses another neologism *brootgeheim*, which I translate as ‘mystery of the bread’, but could also be translated as ‘bread-mystery.’ This type of word compounding is a form of parataxis, and is a very economical way of juxtaposing more than one idea within the confines of the metre.²⁶ Other examples of words with *geheim* as the suffix in this book of the poem are *Aertsgeheim* (476; 1166), *Heilgeheim* (474), *Hoofdgeheim* (479) and *Spijsgeheim* (1552).

301. Omers (*gomers*) are the vessels in which the manna was collected (Exodus 16:16).

304. ‘A stately figure’ refers to the Old Testament prophet Elijah, to whom Vondel’s attention now shifts.

The feeding of Elijah and his miracles (305-328)

Commentary

Here, Vondel draws on three episodes from the life of the Old Testament prophet, Elijah, to show how God can intervene in and overcome the laws of the natural world in order to provide succour to the faithful. Molkenboer notes that Cardinal Bellarmine sees the third of these episodes, ‘the bread of angels by which Elijah walked in strength for forty days’, as a prefiguration of the Eucharist. As elsewhere, it is Molkenboer’s contention that Vondel is drawing heavily here from Bellarmine’s defence of Catholic Eucharistic theology, *Controversia de Sacramento Eucharistiae sex libris explicata*.²⁷ In the section, Vondel has

²⁶ Michael Patrick O’Connor, ‘Parataxis and Hypotaxis,’ in: *Preminger and Brogan, op. cit.*, 879-880, at 880.

²⁷ Molkenboer, ‘De Bronnen der Altaer-geheimenissen,’ in: *De Katholiek, 1907, Deel 131*, I, 301-315, II, 379-393; Deel 132, III, 41-52 and IV, 130-158. In I, 313, Molkenboer goes so far as to say that ‘the number of word-for-word parallels is...so surprising, that any doubt (that Vondel borrowed from Bellarmine) simply has to be excluded’. For Bellarmine, as a source for Book I of this poem, in particular, see II, at 379-389. Brom (1935), *op. cit.*, 240 supports Molkenboer’s general argument, as does M. van Can (‘Jacob Westerbaen, Bestrijder van Vondel,’ in: *Vondeljaarboek 1949*, 28-79, at 34). It is likely that a copy of Bellarmine’s work would have been in the library of the Amsterdam pastor Leonardus Marius (see note to lines 397-400 below), whom Vondel knew well and that he would have consulted this in the process of writing the present poem. Apart from Bellarmine’s influence on the present poem, another scholar, P. Dr. Maximilianus, points to the influence of his *De Ascensione mentis in Deum* (On the Ascension of the soul to God) on the third book of Vondel’s epic poem on God, *Bespiegelingen van Godt en Godtsdienst* (Reflections on God and Religion). See ‘Het derde boek der Bespiegelingen en Bellarminus’ in: *Tijdschrift voor Nederlandse Taal- en Letterkunde*, 69 (1952), 243-267. A. Zijderveld also points to the influence of Bellarmine’s *Explanatio in Psalmos* on Vondel’s rather free rendering of the bible text in his *Harp-zangen*, no. 67 (A. Zijderveld, ‘Bellarmijn, Vondels Meester’ in: *Het Vondel-Museum, Zestiende Verslag der Vereeniging 1932-’33*, 56-57).

Elijah himself tell his own story, recounted in the bible in I Kings 17-19. In the first episode (I Kings 17:1-6), Elijah flees the court of King Ahab ('the Samarian court,' 308) and is told by the Lord to go and abide by the Wadi Cherith. He is then fed by ravens, twice a day, once in the morning and once in the evening. After this, the Lord directs Elijah to Sidon, where he meets a widow. She has little food and drink, but Elijah assures her that she will have enough to feed him, and indeed (vv. 14-16), 'the jar of meal was not emptied, neither did the jug of oil fail.' Finally, Vondel recounts a third episode from I Kings 19, referred to above in relation to Bellarmine's influence on Vondel. Here, Elijah finds shelter under a tree and falls asleep. An angel visits him and gives him enough food and drink for him to walk for forty days and nights to Mount Horeb (324). Vondel concludes the section by reminding the reader that God's blessing can bring results that Nature cannot match (327 – i.e. it does not 'always follow Nature's path').

Notes

308. The Samarian court is the court of King Ahab. Ahab was the King of Israel, but had erected an altar for Baal in the house of Baal in Samaria which, the bible tells us, provoked the wrath of the Lord, the God of Israel. Elijah the Tishbite told Ahab that as a consequence there would be a severe drought in Israel, and the Lord then told Elijah to hide by the Wadi Cherith.

309. Cherith: this is the form we find in the Vulgate as well as in more recent English translations such as the NRSV.²⁸ Vondel uses the form *Krith*. This is the form we find, for example, in the *Statenbijbel*. The question of which Dutch language bible(s) Vondel referred to requires further investigation, but this reminds us at least that he did not slavishly follow the language of the Vulgate. That said, he may have chosen the shorter form to fit the metre. In the second half of the line, Vondel provides a neat antithesis 'as if buried alive' to say that although Elijah was technically still alive, it seemed that he might as well have been dead, until God provided food for him by the ravens.

310. At Cherith, Elijah was fed by ravens. Vondel provides an alliterative effect by referring to these birds as *roofgezinde raven*.

311. The ravens fed Elijah twice a day, once in the morning and once in the evening (v. 6).

316. A good example of synecdoche.

317. The Dutch for '[I] laid my tired limbs' (*mijn moede leden leide*) is full of long vowels which gives a sense of the languid, and of the tiredness that Elijah felt at this point.

318. The Vulgate calls the tree *iuniper* and the *Statenbijbel* calls it a *jeneverboom*, both of which are of course cognate with the English *juniper*. However, modern translations refer to the tree as a broom tree (NRSV) (*Nieuwe Bijbelvertaling: bremstruik*). I translate Vondel's word as juniper, mindful of the fact that in modern translations of the bible, it is called a broom tree.

²⁸ By contrast, the form in the 2004 *Nieuwe Bijbelvertaling* is *Kerit*. I discuss the question of which bible(s) Vondel referred to in more detail above in the note to line 207.

322. The food and drink that the angel brought Elijah sustained him for forty days. The ‘day-torch’ (*daghtorts*) refers to the sun.

324. Mount Horeb is referred in the bible as the mount of God.

Elisha's miracle (329-337)

Commentary

Elijah continues to address Vondel and points to an episode which is recounted in the bible, after those described in the previous section, involving the prophet Elisha. Here (II Kings 4:42-44), God takes twenty loaves of barley and fresh ears of grain and multiplies them to feed one hundred people with something left over. This has resonances with the stories in the New Testament of the feeding of four thousand and the feeding of the five thousand, alluded to in line 334. The latter is recounted in John 6, in which Christ admonishes the people of Capernaum for not understanding what he means when he says ‘I am the bread of life’ (v. 48), and like the episode from the Old Testament, it too may be seen as a prefiguration of the Eucharist. The section concludes with Elijah telling the poet to ‘look forward to something greater’ (336), i.e. the Eucharist, and Vondel says that he listened and wished to unravel this, i.e. the mystery of how God can feed the many with what seems to be little. This final line (337) reminds us that the recounting of this and other episodes is all part of the process of Vondel trying to understand the Mysteries of the Altar.

Notes

329. *Na my* could mean ‘according to me’ i.e. to Vondel, or ‘after me’ in which case ‘me’ would probably refer to Elijah, as the story of Elisha comes after that of Elijah in the bible. I choose the latter in the translation.

Samson's riddle (338-360)

Commentary

Vondel now takes us back to the book of Judges, in which (chapters 14-16) we read of Samson and his struggles with the Philistines. In chapter 14, we read that when Samson went down to Timnah to meet a Philistine woman whom he had already seen and to whom he was attracted, he came across a lion. As a man of great strength, he tore the lion apart with his bare hands. Having met the woman he then returned to marry her and on his way came across the carcass of the lion and there was a swarm of bees in the body of the lion and honey. Samson scraped the honey out with his hands and ate it. At the wedding feast, as was the custom, he set the guests a riddle: ‘Out of the eater came something to eat. Out of the strong came something sweet,’ which was based on the fact that he found honey in the body of the lion (‘the eater’ and ‘the strong’). After several days, he gave into his wife’s persistence and told her the answer to the riddle. She then told the guests and Samson had to pay a forfeit as they could now tell him the meaning of the riddle. In a later, and perhaps more famous episode, in Judges 16, Samson fell in love with another Philistine woman, Delilah. She was asked by her fellow Philistines to find out what the secret of Samson’s strength was. Again, in the first instance, he would not tell her, but eventually he told her that

his strength lay in his hair. When Samson fell asleep, Delilah called in a man to cut his locks and so he lost his strength and was then seized and blinded by the Philistines.

In this section of the poem, it seems that Vondel has, either deliberately or unwittingly, conflated these two episodes, ascribing the solving of the riddle of the lion to Delilah. Neither Zeij (pp. 21-22) nor Molkenboer pass comment on this, with Molkenboer noting that the puzzle belongs to the episode involving Delilah. Notwithstanding this apparent conflation of the two episodes, Vondel's purpose is twofold. First, he recalls the episode of the honey found by Samson in the lion's body, which is seen as a prefiguration of Christ, the lion of Judah, who, though dying on the cross, provided the sweet food of the Eucharist. Secondly, Vondel points to the very nature of prefiguration itself, in that this involves finding something of value, or something sweet, in an outer core, which protects it. The sweet honey is found in the dead body of the lion and the puzzle itself provides an outer core to the answer, a fact which Vondel reminds us of at the end of this section by saying 'The shell must be removed, // Before the nut can be tasted.'

Notes

338. 'Before that' (*te rugge*) tells us that the story of Samson occurs earlier in the bible than those of Elijah and Elisha.

339. Zeij (p. 21) discusses the Eastern tradition of telling riddles at feasts. Just as Samson's riddle seduced (*bekoorde*) Vondel, so Samson had a penchant for seducing women. Vondel alludes to this aspect of Samson's character later in lines 344-5: 'for woman's love // Could time after time subdue the effeminate heart.'

347. The 'sweet-talker' (*vleister*) here is Delilah.

351-2. As I discuss in the commentary to this section above, this is the answer to an earlier riddle, which is not mentioned in the episode involving Delilah in Judges 16.

356. The tense of the verb *dorf* is not clear. Molkenboer suggests it is the equivalent of the modern Dutch *durf*, which is a present tense form of the verb *durven*, to dare.²⁹ Van Helten agrees, noting that the *o* replaces an *a* by analogy with the present plural.³⁰ Another possibility is that it is a preterite form and should be translated as 'I dared'. Although form supports the former suggestion, context supports the latter, as the verb points to a time before Vondel's conversion to Catholicism when he dared not ask the meaning of the episode of the honey in the lion's body, but now he is able to do so, and sees it as a prefiguration of the Eucharist.

358-60. *Raetseldop* is another neologism of Vondel's literally referring to the shell which surrounds the puzzle. It is not in the *Woordenboek der Nederlandse Taal* under *raadsel* or under *dop*. He concludes the section with an aphoristic couplet which neatly summarizes the central theme of this section, that the outer shell must be removed, before what it contains can be enjoyed, and that what the outer shell contains is often of greater value than the shell itself.

Gideon's dream of the bread rolling into the army camp (361-70)

²⁹ Vondel does in fact use the form *durf* in line 276 of Book II of *Altaer-geheimenissen: een droom wort waer: men durf niet langer raden*.

³⁰ Van Helten, *op. cit.*, Vormleer 36, para. 47.

Commentary

Vondel now turns to another episode from an earlier chapter of the Book of Judges, concerning the figure of Gideon, and again sees in this episode a prefiguration of the Eucharist. In Judges 7:13, Gideon tells a comrade that he has a dream, in which a cake of barley bread tumbled into the camp of his enemies, the Midianites, and the cake struck the tent of the enemy causing it to collapse. The comrade interprets the dream saying that the cake stands for the sword of Gideon and he will lead Israel in victory over the enemy, Midian. Vondel summarizes this in lines 362-4, but prefaces his account saying that not even Gideon fully understood the dream (361), for Vondel sees in the dream a further prefiguration of the Eucharist, an interpretation denied to Gideon. He makes this point in lines 365-7, saying ‘what greater thing lurks in such barley crumbs...’ and of course the answer for Vondel is the transubstantiated body of Christ in the Mass. He then takes the interpretation of the dream which tells us that the cake of barley stands for Gideon’s sword to say that he, i.e. Vondel, will cut down and cut off a crueler head than that of Oreb or Zeeb, the captains of Midian (Judges 8:3). The head Vondel is referring to is that of the devil, whose head he now feels able to cut off in some sense after his conversion to Catholicism. He concludes the section by saying that although he now understands the prophecies and prefigurations that he has been describing since the reference to Melchizedek in line 79, these do not suffice and now he wants the real thing.

Notes

367. Midian’s camels are referred to in Judges 7:12, where they are said to be without number.

368. The form of the name Oreb is found in both the Vulgate and the *Statenbijbel*.³¹ However, for the captain of the Midianites whom Vondel calls *Seb*, the Vulgate has *Zeb* and the *Statenbijbel* has *Zeëb*.

The Prophecies (371-384)

Commentary

This short section acts as a bridge between the specific prophecies and prefigurations of the preceding lines and the arrival of John the Evangelist, who will reveal to Vondel the significance of Christ’s words ‘This is my body, This is my blood.’ Vondel begins with a reference to Mount Sion, ‘David’s mountain of sacrifice,’ referred to in Deuteronomy 33:19 and at various points in the Psalms, and says that although feasts of the choicest meat and wine were celebrated there, these pale into insignificance compared to the feast which is the Mass. In 374, Vondel refers to these feasts as the blossom, not the fruit and Molkenboer is right to suggest that here we see an autobiographical reference as Vondel seems to bemoan

³¹ Further research will be carried out on other Dutch language bibles to see what forms of proper names they contain. A study of the forms of proper names that Vondel uses will be one way in which I shall try to identify which bible(s) he referred to in writing this poem. Mention of the *Statenbijbel* does not indicate that we think it any more or less likely that he referred to this bible than to any other Dutch language bible. It merely indicates that at this stage of the investigation, this is the principal Dutch language bible which I have studied for this purpose.

the fact that he finally tasted the fruit, i.e. the Mass, at too late a stage in his life. He was born in 1587, and by Molkenboer's account,³² he converted to Catholicism in 1639, when he was about 52.³³ In lines 376-379, he alludes to Isaiah 2:3. Here, there is a prophecy that Zion/Jerusalem, the mountain of the Lord's house 'shall be established as the highest of the mountains, and shall be raised above the hills.' Vondel takes this to be a prophecy concerning Christ, who will come and establish the celebration of the Eucharist. He addresses Zion directly, saying 'O mountain of sacrifice!' says it will raise its head above the clouds and will shake with people rejoicing, i.e. at the coming of Christ. He then draws on the language of the book of Revelation 21, which prophecies a new heaven and new earth and says (v.4) that God 'will wipe every tear from their eyes' (cf. 380) and 'death will be no more' (cf. 382).

Notes

374. Reference to Vondel wanting the fruit, not the blossom, which suggests the idea of something more valuable being enclosed inside something less valuable, echoes the aphorism concerning the shell and the nut in lines 359-60.

380-2. Vondel repeats these ideas, drawn from Revelation 21, at the very end of this poem, in Book III, lines 1693 ([God] wipes away the tears) and 1694 ([God] kills death).

383-4. The time shifts that Vondel uses in the poem can be somewhat confusing. In these lines, he still waits for the advent of Christ and the institution of the Eucharist, even though he has clearly seen them coming in lines 376ff. Perhaps the point is that until John the Evangelist arrives, Vondel will still be surrounded by the shadows, or prefigurations, with which he has had to make do thus far.³⁴

Saint John the Evangelist appears (385-408)

Commentary

And so St. John the Evangelist appears to Vondel. The shadows with which he has had to make do up until now disappear and he will now see the truth. Molkenboer suggests that of the four Gospel writers, Vondel chooses John as the reading of John 6, to which he refers repeatedly during the poem, was an important staging post in Vondel's turn to Catholicism and his acceptance of the assertion that the consecrated bread and wine do turn substantially into the body and blood of Christ in the Eucharist.³⁵ In another of his poems, on the first Mass of Joannes A. Doedensz., the 'wise Evangelist' i.e. John, is called upon 'to teach of

³² B. H. Molkenboer, 'Wanneer Werd Vondel Katholiek?' in: *Vondelkroniek*, jg. 3, nr. 1, 1-18 and 63-82. See also W. A. P. Smit, 'Vondel en zijn Bekering,' in: *De Nieuwe Taalgids (1935)*, 29, 254-267 on Vondel's conversion. Perhaps the most interesting point that Smit makes, in the conclusion, is that although Vondel did convert to Roman Catholicism, the emphasis remained on the second part of this collocation, i.e. Catholicism in the sense of being part of 'one, holy, catholic and apostolic' Church, rather than on the Roman part of the collocation. This may be true to a certain extent, but it seems that in the present poem, Vondel's emphasis was at least equally on the Roman part of the phrase.

³³ Gerard Brom concurs with this date (Brom (1935), *op. cit.*, 200), as does M. van Can ((1949), *op. cit.*, 30).

³⁴ Brom (1935), *op. cit.*, 210-1 and 238.

³⁵ Molkenboer discusses the matter at more length in: Molkenboer (1907), *op. cit.*, II, 380-1. Frijns (*op. cit.*, 394) also notes that John was the patron of Jacob Boonen, to whom the poem is dedicated, and, perhaps more importantly, of Vondel's spiritual guide, Leonardus Marius.

heavenly secrets.³⁶ John's halo, 'the silver light, that hung like a moon // Right above [his] head' shines from afar and lights up Vondel's forehead (387-9). In line 390, as if again undergoing some form of repentance, he acknowledges that he has gone astray, but also that he now receives John with sheer gladness. John takes his book and climbs on the back of an eagle, both attributes of him, and swoops down before Vondel. Again, we are encouraged to think of Vondel reading John 6, perhaps the 'first dawn' of line 399, and of his subsequent reflections on the content of the chapter. Upto this point, Vondel has not in fact given us the name of John, though references to the book and eagle are clear allusions to his identity. In line 405, he refers to the saint as 'the last of the four pens', referring to the fact that John's gospel appears after the other three gospels in the New Testament. He then conjures up a wonderful image of the pen of John and those of the other three Gospel writers pulling the chariot of Christ. A similar image is found in Dante (*Purgatorio*, XXIX, 105-8),³⁷ and it recalls and contrasts with the chariot of Vespasian, in the Roman triumphal march after the sacking of Jerusalem in AD 70, that Vondel refers to earlier in the poem (144-5).

Notes

385. *Als* here is equivalent to *toen*: 'when' referring to a past event, though I suggest it can also be translated as 'as'.³⁸

388. At first, Vondel does not reveal the name of the saint in the text, but reveals his identity gradually, perhaps mirroring the process by which he came to know gradually what he now understands to be the truth. He merely refers to John as 'a young man' (*Jongeling*) in the first instance. There is no biblical evidence to suggest that John was any younger than the other Gospel writers, and Molkenboer suggests that Vondel calls him young after his Italian name, Giovanni, which is a diminutive form.

389-90. Very unusually for Vondel, the final words in this couplet, *verre* and (morgen)*starre*, do not quite rhyme. The form *morgensterre* did exist in early modern Dutch, e.g. in the 1688 edition of the Statenbijbel: Jes. 14, 12 *Hoe zijt gy uyt den hemel gevallen, O morgensterre, gy sone des dageraets?* However, Vondel uses *morgenstar* in the 1654 edition of *Lucifer: Al hoogh genoeg in top Gods Morgenstar gedragen* (l. 349). The difference may be a dialectical one, but it would require further investigation to establish the precise reason for it.

392. Molkenboer notes that 'the description of John's outward appearance is in line with baroque representations of him in Vondel's time.' However, it is not entirely clear what aspect of John's appearance Molkenboer is referring to. If it is the purple attire of line 392, then such a statement seems surprising, for if we look at a typically baroque painting, such as Rubens' *Deposition of Christ*, painted in c. 1612-14 and now in Antwerp Cathedral, then we see that John is clothed in his traditional red garment. We might get a better idea of what Molkenboer has in mind by following up on a comparison he makes between Vondel's description of John and that of the boy Jacob in an earlier poem by Vondel *De Feest van*

³⁶ Molkenboer note to lines 390-1.

³⁷ Italian: *Giovanni è meco e da lui si diparte. // Lo spazio dentro a lor quattro contenne // un carro, in su due rote, triünfale, // ch'al collo d'un grifon tirato venne.* English: John is with me and departs from him. // The space between these four contained // a triumphal carriage on two wheels, // which came drawn on the neck of a griffon. Molkenboer wrote on interesting analogies between Vondel's poem and Dante's *Divine Comedy* on several occasions, including an essay 'Dante en Vondel' in a 1921 volume commemorating the 600th anniversary of Dante's death. See W. Asselberg, 'In Memoriam: B. H. Molkenboer, O. P.,' in: *Vondeljaarboek 1949* (Amsterdam), 14-19, at 17.

³⁸ Van Helten, *op. cit.*, Vormleer 158, para. 160.

*Hillebrand Bentes en Katharine Baeck.*³⁹ Certainly the two descriptions have some words in common, such as the verb *slingeren*, which Molkenboer glosses as *omslaan* (to wrap [oneself] in). But beyond this, the descriptions do not have much in common, so it remains somewhat unclear exactly what he had in mind with the quote cited at the start of this note.

397-400. Gerard Brom suggests that although these lines ostensibly refer to John the Evangelist, Vondel may have had the figure of Pastor Leonard Marius at the back of his mind when referring to his ‘upright heart open to [his] desires [to learn about the Catholic Church].’⁴⁰

403-5. Here, Vondel refers to the belief that the bible is divinely inspired (cf. II Peter 1:21), and that it is therefore inerrant.

407. It is perhaps unexpected for Vondel to say that at first John the Evangelist was ‘not known to [him] at first.’ Molkenboer suggests that this may point to a greater acquaintance with another John, the Baptist, in the first instance. There is no evidence for this. He did write an epic poem on John the Baptist, *Johannes de boetgezant. Begrepen in zes boecken* (John the Baptist. In six books), but this was not published until 1662. It may simply be that either Vondel was more acquainted with the other gospels earlier in his life, or again he wants

³⁹ See Vondel, *De Werken* 3, 784. Molkenboer gives the reference lines 23-23, but it is in fact 23-26. The lines run, *Een kleed, zoo blanck als sneeuw, geslingert om de leden, // Hing met een eedlen zwier van boven tot beneden, // En rijck bezaeit met goud van starren, zonder tal; // Gelijk de hemel blinckt, en eeuwich blincken zal.*

⁴⁰ Brom (1935), *op. cit.*, 198. See 196 ff. for a discussion of Marius’ role in Vondel’s spiritual and intellectual life. Molkenboer states that he is by and large convinced by Brom’s argument (‘Vondels Altaergeheimenissen,’ in: *Van onzen Tijd*, jg. 6, 97-129) that Marius’ work *Amstelredams eer ende opcomen (door de denckwaerdighe miraculen aldaer geschied aen ende door het h. sacrament des Altaers, anno 1345)*, published in 1639, was one of the principle influences on Vondel in his development of this poem, but does strike a note of caution and certainly wants to avoid talk of it being a *bron* (source) (Brom, 100) for Vondel. See Molkenboer, ‘De Bronnen,’ I, *op. cit.*, 306 (see also: Willem Frijhoff and Marijke Spies, *Bevochten Eendracht 1650* (The Hague: SDU, 1999), 387, for a brief introduction to the theme of Marius’ work). M. van Can seems cautious and refers to the correspondences between Marius’ work and Vondel’s poem as ‘parallels.’ Indeed if we take a look at some of the examples Brom quotes (p. 128), then some correspondences between Vondel’s poem and Marius’ work seem stronger than others. One passage that Brom points to in Marius’ work which does seem to find a direct correspondence in Vondel’s poem comes in pp. 229-230. Here, Marius writes *Wat is dit kleedt [van een Coninck]? Het spinsel van wormen. Oft eert ghy de werw?’ ‘t is maar bloet van een doode visch.* It seems reasonable to suggest that reference to a (silk)worm and a fish here may have inspired lines 17-20 in Book I of Vondel’s poem. However, in another example that Brom gives to support his assertion that Marius’ work is a source, a direct connection is less clear. On page 170 of his work, Marius writes [*Calvinus is*] *in die leer veranderlick gheweest want als hy eerst gheleert hadde dat de teycken van het Heylighe Avontmael alleen op der aerde zyn ende dat het lichaem Christi in den Hemel is; soo heeft hy evenwel daer naer ghemeinelick gheleert dat Godt ons met het Sacrament van het lichaem Christi, oock in der waerheydt het lichaem Christi mede geeft.* Brom argues that these words inspired lines 1153-1174 of Book I of Vondel’s poem. As can be seen below, Molkenboer makes a stronger case for these lines having been inspired by Bellarmine and in any case Marius’ central charge, that Calvin was prone to changing his position in his Eucharistic theology, is one that others have made including of course Bellarmine. W. M. Frijns takes a different approach to evaluating the strength of Brom’s argument saying that Vondel borrows from Marius in the second book of his poem. See Frijns, *op. cit.*, 383. Frijns also makes the point (387), which is perhaps most pertinent of all in this discussion, that it was probably during the many conversations that Vondel would have had with Marius that the latter influenced the poet in ways which find expression in the present poem. Finally, in relation to Marius’ work, it is interesting to note that his name does not appear on the frontispiece of the work. The publishing details given are: *T’Antwerpen by Hendrick Aertssens 1639 by Boetius A. Bolswert.* Questions arise similar to those surrounding the details given on the frontispiece of the first edition of the present poem, and would provide an interesting avenue for research.

to reveal John gradually to us, in the manner that the meaning of John's gospel, especially Chapter 6, was revealed to him.

To reveal the truth of the Images, Shadows, Prophecies and Promises (409-414)

Commentary

John introduces himself to Vondel, for whom he has come down to reveal the truth of the body, i.e. of Christ, itself in the Eucharist.

Notes

409. John calls himself 'the youngest Evangelist', echoing the 'young man' of 388. Again there is no evidence that he was the youngest Evangelist, but see the commentary on 388 above for further discussion of the matter. (*Ick) koom* '(I) come' is an alternative form for (*ick) kom*.⁴¹

410. 'The other life' refers to heaven.

411-2. John recognizes that Vondel is tired of the shadows and prefigurations that he has seen so far and now wants the real thing. Essentially, Vondel uses tautology here. In the Dutch, he draws attention to the words by the alliteration of *schijn* (appearance) en *schaduw* (shadow). As with his use of other tropes elsewhere, such as polysyndeton, Vondel uses such an effect for emphasis.

414. In John 13:25 and 21:20, there are references to a disciple reclining next to Christ at the Last Supper, and traditionally this is assumed to be John the Evangelist. As elsewhere, Vondel refers to Christ as Wisdom.

The Evangelist introduces Christ, the food of souls (415-428)

Commentary

Here, John summarizes the salvation history of the Christian tradition, beginning with the sin of Adam, which Vondel refers to earlier in the poem (ll. 54ff.),⁴² and concluding with the advent of Christ, who overcame sin. For the Catholic Vondel, this history continues with the Eucharist, instituted by Christ at the Last Supper, and which provides the faithful with an antidote to the mortal wounds of sin. Earlier (ll. 59-60), Vondel says that after the Fall, Adam could no longer enjoy food that made the body and soul immortal. However, with the institution of the Eucharist, such food can now be enjoyed again, and, in fact, it is better than the food Adam enjoyed in Eden (426).

⁴¹ Van Helten, *op. cit.*, Vormleer 27, para. 38.

⁴² Cf. Frijns, *op. cit.*, 395-6.

Notes

415-6. Here, we have two lovely images of God. One is of God deciding ‘in himself’ (*by zich*). The Dutch *Godtheit* might better be translated as ‘Godhead’ and it is as if the three persons of the Trinity are discussing amongst themselves how to rectify Adam’s sin. The second image is of God having ‘arms of grace’ (*armen van gena*), with which to embrace Adam and his descendants. Such an allusion is of course figurative, but raises the question of the extent to which Vondel thought of God and his actions in anthropomorphic terms.

418. The ‘one seed’ is Christ. I disagree with Molkenboer that the serpent is the subject (*leen[am]v[a]l*) of the second half of this line and that Christ is the accusative object (*leen[am]v[a]l*).⁴³ Further, in referring to the seed treading on the serpent, Vondel is not following the Vulgate in this instance at least. In Genesis 3:15, it runs *ipsa conteret caput tuum*. The *ipsa* is a feminine pronoun and so cannot refer to the seed, whilst Vondel clearly thinks that it is the seed, i.e. Christ, who will tread on the serpent. Molkenboer, taking his lead from Gerard Brom,⁴⁴ suggests that this indicates the use of a Protestant bible by Vondel in this instance at least. Neither commentator, though, states which Protestant bible they think Vondel has drawn from. I discuss the question of which Dutch language bible(s), including which Protestant bible(s) Vondel may have used in the note to line 207 above.

419. ‘Head and crest’ are tautological, and, as with *schijn* and *schaduw* in 412, the Dutch *kop* (head) and *kam* (crest) are alliterative.

420-1. Here, we see the paradox of Christ being wounded unto death licking the wounds of the world with his tongue through the salvific act of his death. If one were to imagine this in any sense literally, though, one would not want to dwell too long on the idea of Christ licking wounds with his tongue.

428. These words echo those of the Catholic liturgy: *O sacrum convivium* (O sacred banquet), a Latin prose text honouring the Sacrament, written by Thomas Aquinas.⁴⁵

And gives reasons why God leads us slowly through the insufficiency of nature and law to the sufficiency of grace and through shadows, Prophecies and Promises to the light of the Gospel. (429-513)

Commentary: Introduction

In this section, Vondel puts forward ten or so analogies for the Eucharist, or to be more specific, the Mass. In each case, he draws parallels between the object being described and the Mass, but in each case he recognizes that the analogy can only be a partial one, which is only to be expected for an analogy, for there is in fact nothing which is exactly equivalent to the Mass.

⁴³ Frijns (*op. cit.*, 395, n. 16) also disagrees with Molkenboer.

⁴⁴ Gerard Brom, ‘Vondels Bijbel,’ in: *Studia Catholica*, jg. 5, 1928-9, 296-7.

⁴⁵ See Molkenboer (1907), IV, 148-150 for a further discussion on Thomas Aquinas’ influence on Vondel.

Commentary

(Gold)

The first object with which Vondel makes an analogy is gold (423-456). Here, Vondel begins by extolling the virtues of gold and noting that it does not rust (440) or melt in the hottest of heats (441). He goes on to recognize that although gold lies deep underground, people consider it so valuable that they are willing to work night and day to extract it. Some indeed lose their lives in mining gold, but whereas gold is not as valuable as life, and cannot give back the life which it takes (449-50), there is something else which for Vondel saves life: 'the salvific gold of heaven' (452), i.e. the Mass.

Notes

429. This may be another autobiographical reference, as Vondel took a good deal of time before becoming a Catholic (see commentary on 370-384 above). In the Dutch, Vondel uses two partitive genitives: *veel tijts*; *veel werx*. This is not unusual for Vondel for nouns that are in the masculine (*tijt*) or neuter (*werk*) singular.⁴⁶

431. Note the alliteration of *Zweeten* (sweating) and *zwoegen* (toiling).

432. Here we have another example of polysyndeton: *...en (and)...en (and) ...*, which is a common feature of this poem.

433-5. The image here is of Nature as a pregnant woman, especially in l. 435, though Nature takes much longer than the woman to produce gold. Whether, with reference to l. 434, Vondel actually believed that the sun did indeed purify gold or whether this is a lyrical flourish is not clear. But we must of course realize that a good deal, though not all, of the science of the seventeenth century has been superseded.

435. *Arrebeit* (work) includes a svarabhakti vowel (*arrebeit*), presumably to assist the metre.

439-40. Vondel cleverly emphasizes what gold does not do, i.e. rust or corrode, by placing the two occurrences of *noch* (neither) in line 439 in the same position in the line, as those in the next line, 440.

443. In another of his epic poems, *Bespiegelingen* (III, 580-1), Vondel also uses gold to allude to the everlasting nature of God: *De duurzaamheit van 't gout...wijst op d'eeuwigheit van Godt, die noit veraerde* (The durability of gold...points to the eternity of God, who never changes his nature).

455. The Mass is referred to as a medicine (*artseny*) here and elsewhere in Book I of the poem: lines 70, 90, 422, 1529 and *zielartsny* (soul medicine) 1107 and 1608.

Commentary

(A delicious meal)

The second analogy that Vondel makes with the Mass is that of a delicious meal (456-472). The meal is one that is 'put before the Emperor' (456), into which a huge amount of time and effort goes in order to ensure that it is the most delicious meal in the world and contains a wide range of foods (460-1). There are even those who are enslaved (462) in order to ensure

⁴⁶ Van Helten, *op.cit.*, Syntaxis 129, para. 260.

that that one tongue (of the Emperor) (464) is satisfied for one brief moment. And even if it is a sumptuous meal, the Emperor may in the end be nauseated by it, for however marvelous this meal is, it is insufficient in comparison to a meal that ‘feed[s] forever and forever suffice[s]’ (469) i.e. the Eucharist, or, specifically for Vondel, the Mass. Vondel concludes the section by borrowing from agricultural terminology to describe how from the beginning of time, heaven had ploughed a field and sowed a seed, which in the goodness of time would grow into the ‘most holy grain’ (472), i.e. the bread of the Eucharist.

Notes

458. Here we find another example of tautology, though in this case Vondel uses three words or phrases to signify the same thing: *t’effens*; *eens*; and *met eenen beet*.

461. Here Vondel pushes polysyndeton to the limit here and in 463, using the conjunction *en* (and) three times in this line.

463. *Alle sexe*, literally ‘all sexes’ for ‘both sexes’ may seem strange, but it allows Vondel to qualify *slagh* (race[s]) as well. This line contains four occurrences of the conjunction *en* (and).

464-5. The Dutch text does not distinguish between *eene/een* meaning ‘a’ and *éene/één*, meaning ‘one.’ Molkenboer is probably right though to say that in each case in these lines, the number as opposed to the indefinite article is appropriate.

468-9. The word *eeuwich* (eternal) is written twice and *eeuwichlijck* (eternally) once in these lines, so *eeuwich* appears three times. Repetition is a common device in the poem to add emphasis.

470ff. The image of agriculture which concludes this section echoes that of mining which comes towards the end of the previous section on gold.

Commentary

(Bride and Bridegroom)

In this third analogy of the section (473-7), Vondel likens the relationship between the prefigurations of the Old Testament and the reality of the Eucharist instituted in the New Testament to a bridegroom being shown the portrait of his bride-to-be before seeing her in the flesh, as it were. In his commentary on the poem, Jac. Zeij begins by noting that such an analogy may seem unusual in the first instance to the modern mind.⁴⁷ He then goes on to speculate whether Vondel might have had a particular painting in mind and points to a painting by Rubens, for which he reproduces a sketch, in which King Henry IV of France is shown the portrait of Maria de Medici by figures from heaven, in order to prepare him for his eventual meeting with Maria herself. Of course, sometimes there may not have been a great likeness between the portrait and the bride-to-be, as is reputed to have been the case with the portrait of Anne of Cleves that Henry VIII had commissioned Hans Holbein to make, but this is not perhaps Vondel’s point.

⁴⁷ Zeij, *op. cit.*, 28.

Notes

473. Here and in 478, Vondel refers to one aspect of the divine as ‘God’s Wisdom’ (*Godts Wijsheit*). Elsewhere, for example in line 414, he refers specifically to Christ as Wisdom.

474. *Heilgeheim* (holy mystery) is one of a number of compound words of which the second part is *geheim* in this poem. See the note to line 300 for further examples.

Commentary

There now follow in quick succession seven further analogies or aphorisms which help to cast light on the nature of the Eucharist (478-491). These are (1), that God, referred to again as God’s Wisdom, proceeds in an orderly manner and he builds the foundations first before the building itself (478). Secondly, Vondel says that one must approach God step by step rather than in one go and draws on the *psalmi graduales* (gradual psalms) that the Jews sang as they went up the steps of the Temple in Jerusalem to approach the Holy of Holies (479-80). The third analogy Vondel makes (481) is with the Gordian knot that Alexander the Great cut with his sword. The point here seems to be that just as the knot remained tied for many years, but was finally cut through by the hero’s (Alexander’s) sword, so too was the mystery of how man could gain salvation resolved after many years, by Christ, through the institution of the Eucharist. The fourth analogy or in this case aphorism is that just as far away (unseen) stars can only be seen with help, perhaps pointing to the relatively new invention of the telescope, so the truth of God’s saving power can only be seen with the help of miracles. Although it is not made explicit here, Vondel may be referring either to the prefigurations of the Old Testament or to the outward signs of bread and wine in the Eucharist in mentioning stars. The fifth analogy is two-fold (482-3) and each part tells us that something valuable is often surrounded by something less valuable, which nevertheless protects it. This recalls the earlier aphorism in lines 359-60: ‘The shell must be removed, // Before the nut can be tasted.’ The sixth analogy or piece of wisdom that Vondel imparts (485-488) is that when one unravels a mystery, what one finds is something other than that which was perhaps anticipated when the mystery was first encountered. Finally (489-491), Vondel says that we should not expect to be presented directly with something that is of value. Rather, the process of unravelling something such as a mystery teaches us to value the thing once we truly understand it.

Notes

478. Molkenboer quotes Thomas Aquinas who says that the event of God becoming man had to take a long time in preparation *propter ordinem promotionis in bonum* (on account of the order of progress towards the good) (*Summa Theologiae III, 1, 5*).

479. *Hooftegeheim* (great/chief mystery) is one of several compound words in the poem, the last part of which is *geheim* (mystery). See note on line 300 for further examples.

482. Molkenboer is probably right to suggest that there is a hidden reference here to the telescope. Although the invention of this instrument is most closely associated with the Italian, Galileo, the contribution to the invention by Dutch instrument makers such as

Zacharias Jansen (c. 1580-after 1628) and Hans Lipperhey (d. 1619) should not be forgotten.⁴⁸

488. Brom compares this line with 580 seeing them both as alluding to how Vondel heard and saw (spiritual) things differently when he became a Catholic.⁴⁹

489. *Verborgentheden* (mysteries) contains an epenthetic *t* between the *en* and the suffix of derivation *heid* (here in the plural *heden*), other examples of which are to be found elsewhere in Vondel's work.⁵⁰

Commentary

(The meaning of the prefigurations and prophecies)

(492-512) The prefigurations and prophecies are not without use, for they gradually prepared people for the very thing for which they acted as prefigurations and prophecies, i.e. the Holy Sacrament (*Aertsheilighdom* 492). For Vondel, these signs and symbols brought the people into line behind the procession of the Mass (499-501). But when the Word became flesh (506), they did not yet know that it was he, born of the Virgin, who would unlock the mystery of the meaning of the prefigurations, and in the next section, we learn that he did make clear to the people what these signs meant.

Notes

492. *Aertsheilighdom*, translated as 'Holy Sacrament,' is another one of the many neologisms Vondel coins in this poem.

493. Whether it is coincidental or not, and it seems that sometimes that it is coincidental, Vondel obtains some resonance between the promises (*beloften*) and the leaves (*loof*) in which they were hidden before the advent of Christ by using the phonemes *loof* and *lof* in quick succession.

493-5. Here Vondel summarizes the prefigurations that he has detailed previously with a range of synonyms, with which, as is so often the case in this poem, he effectively says the same thing. He does not do so without art though, for the fact that these signs preceded the reality they point to is emphasized by beginning two consecutive lines, 494-5, with the same prefix, *voor*, cognate with the English for(e)- or pre-, and for good measure he ends line 495 with the same syllable.

499. 'It' refers to 'the wondrous priceless treasure' of 498.

502. Molkenboer draws a comparison between this line and Luke 14:16, which marks the start of the parable of the great dinner: 'Someone gave a great dinner and invited many.' It is interesting to note that as is often the case in the poem, Vondel does not merely say that it is God who invite's guests, but God's grace (*Godts gena*). It may be that this is a poetic flourish, perhaps assisting the poet in maintaining the metre, or it may point to an aspect of the divine, here his grace, which manifests itself in the world, rather than to the substance of

⁴⁸ Christopher Joby, *Calvinism and the Arts: A Re-assessment* (Leuven: Peeters, 2007), 172.

⁴⁹ Brom (1935), *op. cit.*, 246.

⁵⁰ See van Helden, *op. cit.*, Vormleer 22, para. 31.

God, which can thus remain transcendent. The gender of ‘grace’ (*gena*) is feminine in Dutch, hence reference to ‘her guests.’

503. Molkenboer glosses the Dutch *toeven* as *verwachten*. This is incorrect, as *verwachten* is a transitive verb, meaning ‘to expect’ or ‘to anticipate’. *Toeven* here is an intransitive verb meaning ‘to abide.’

505. The fact that Christ took on human flesh leads Vondel to assert that as the consecrated bread of the Mass is transubstantiated into the flesh of Christ, it is thus of the same nature as our own: ‘Of our own nature’ (*van ons natuur*). This may at first seem hard to grasp, but is a logical consequence for Vondel of the incarnation. This is of course unexpected in the first instance and Vondel may be recognizing that by placing the word ‘food’ (*spijs*) and ‘of our nature’ on different lines. Reference to Christ as the Word, and the Word made flesh points above all to the first chapter of the Gospel of John, and it is of course John the Evangelist who is speaking at this point in the poem.

507. The Virgin Mary is in some sense the counterpart to Eve, in a manner similar to the way in which Christ could be seen as the second Adam.⁵¹

508. Reference to God as ‘all-seeing’ (*alziend[]*) reminds us that even though we can only see history sequentially, for some theologians, such as Thomas Aquinas, God has a simultaneous view of the entirety of history and thus knows what will happen to the Christ child born of a Virgin.

509. A reference to, amongst others, the kings and shepherds who came to adore the infant Christ.

510. ‘It’ (*Dit*) refers to the Christ child. The gender of ‘Child’ (*Kint*) is neuter in Dutch.

512. Although Christ was being adored by kings and shepherds (509), they did not yet know the full consequence of his birth and incarnation.

*Christ points, by his miracle of the barley and his conversation with the Jews, to a greater
miracle, and the true Manna, his own Flesh;*
(513-523)

Commentary

Here, Vondel moves quickly from Christ’s birth to his ministry, during which he began to unlock the mystery, the meaning of which finally became fully clear at the Last Supper. The episode that he refers to here, through John the Evangelist, is the feeding of the 5000, recounted in chapter six of John’s gospel. This is followed immediately in the gospel text by Christ’s visit to Capernaum, where he scolds the Jews there for not understanding the meaning of his assertion, ‘I am the bread of life.’ He goes on to contrast the bread of which he is talking with the Manna which God provided to the Jews in the wilderness in the book of Exodus, and Vondel reminds us that the Manna did not give the Jews eternal life.

⁵¹ Cf. Frijns, *op. cit.*, 396-7.

Notes

513. Christ has now moved in the narrative from being the Word made flesh (506) to the Messiah (*Messias*), the anointed one, who offers those who believe and trust in him eternal life.

514-8. The miracle of Christ feeding the 5000. The Gospel of John tells us that a boy had five barley loaves (515) (and two fishes) and that Christ blessed them and they provided food for the 5000 people with him and that there were enough crumbs left over to fill twelve baskets (516).

517-8. After the miracle of the feeding of the 5000, Christ and his disciples take a boat across the Sea of Galilee to the town of Capernaum. When Christ encounters the people there he tells them (John 6:27) that they should not work for food that perishes, but for food that endures for eternal life (518).

521. Still in Capernaum, in John 6:48ff., Christ proclaims that he is the bread of life and tells his listeners that in contrast to their ancestors who ate the Manna in the wilderness and died, those who eat the bread of which he talks (i.e. for Vondel those who partake of Christ's body in the Eucharist) will live for ever. The Jews do not understand what Christ is saying (v. 52 'How can this man give us his flesh to eat?') and at several points in the poem Vondel uses Capernaum to stand for those who do not believe in the doctrine of transubstantiation, particularly the Calvinists.

[Christ] ...expressly promises and proves with high words to give that which was pointed to for so long by shadows (524-542)

Commentary

Here, Vondel begins by continuing the comparison between the promise that Christ made of his own flesh and the Manna provided to the Jews in the wilderness. He then recapitulates the view that the Mass was prefigured by a number of events in the Old Testament which he has discussed at length earlier in the poem. He concludes the section by castigating Capernaum (the 'blind beacon by the Sea of Galilee' (535)) for the unbelief it demonstrated towards Christ's claim to be the bread of life in John 6, continuing a theme with which he ended the previous section. It does not take too great a leap of the imagination to realize that this is also a thinly veiled attack on Geneva, the spiritual home of Calvinism, which, in common with Capernaum, is situated on the shores of a lake, and whose inhabitants denied that the consecrated bread and wine of the Eucharist substantially become Christ's body and blood.

Notes

527. Christ is referred to as the Word, alluding to the beginning of the Gospel of John, who is the speaker here. In John 1:14, we are told that the Word became flesh.

528. This marks the beginning of a list of prefigurations of the Eucharist. The Passover bread (*Paeschbroot*) refers back to lines 100ff., where Vondel writes of the unleavened bread that

the Israelites would eat during the feast of Passover, which lasted for seven days (Exodus 12:15). The Sacrificial Lamb (*Offerlam*) is the Paschal lamb killed and eaten at Passover, which Vondel refers to in lines 169ff.

529. Jerusalem's crumb (*Salems kruim*) refers to the bread offered to Abraham and his army by Melchizedek, King of Salem, or Jerusalem, which Vondel refers to in lines 79ff. The correspondence between Christ and Melchizedek is discussed at length in the Book of Hebrews in the New Testament (see also line 85 above). The shewbread made from wheat was kept in the Holy of Holies and only the Priests were allowed to eat it (Exodus 29:32-33). When the Romans sacked Jerusalem, though, in AD 70, it was taken to Rome and suffered the ignominy of being displayed in the triumphal procession of the Emperor Vespasian. These events are recounted above from line 115 onwards.

530. Elijah's crust (*Elias korst*) points to the several episodes in I Kings where Elijah is miraculously fed, though in particular it probably relates to the episode in Chapter 19, where he encounters an angel and is fed with bread which allows him to journey for forty days without needing to eat again. Vondel recalls these episodes in lines 305ff. above. The episode of the Manna falling from heaven to feed the Jews in the wilderness is drawn from Exodus 16 and Vondel recounts it with several additions from his own imagination in lines 225ff. above.

531-2. 'The puzzle of the honey' (*Het raetsel van den honigh*) points back to the episodes from the life of Samson in Judges 14-16 which Vondel recounts in lines 339ff. above and 'the dream of the rolling bread, [and] the enemy's fright and fear' refer to the dream of Gideon in Judges 7 before he defeated the Midianites in battle, recounted by Vondel in lines 361ff. above.

533. The feast on the mountain (*het berghbancket*) points back to lines 371ff. in which Vondel makes a reference to Mount Zion as, 'David's mountain of sacrifice,' (Deuteronomy 33:19 and various points in the Psalms). Here, Vondel says that although feasts of the choicest meat and indeed wine were celebrated there, these are mere shadows compared to the feast which is the Mass.

534. 'God's far-sighted servants' (*Godts verziende knechten*) are the Prophets of the Old Testament.

536. Molkenboer suggests Vondel is alluding in this line to Matthew 11:23: 'And you, Capernaum, will you be exalted to heaven? No, you will be brought down to Hades.'

537. In New Testament times, Capernaum was one of the leading towns in the area around the Sea of Galilee, even having its own synagogue.

539. Molkenboer suggests that the oath (*eedt*) referred to here is the wording 'Very truly, I tell you...' with which Jesus (the Word) introduces his assertions that he is the bread of life and that those who eat his flesh and drink his blood will have eternal life in verses 47 and 53 of John 6.

540. In The Revelation to John 3:20, Christ is quoted as saying 'Listen! I am standing at the door, knocking; if you hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to you and eat with

you, and you with me.’ Here, the suggestion is that the people of Capernaum did not open the door to Christ.

541. In John 6:54, Christ says ‘Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood have eternal life.’

542. Molkenboer notes that the liturgy of the Sacrament speaks of *fastidiosi divites* (nauseating riches).

...and fulfils his promise on the night before his suffering (543-570)

Commentary

After discussing the events at Capernaum in John 6, which Vondel clearly sees as a promise that the faithful can partake in the flesh and blood of Christ at the Mass, he moves forward about a year (543) to the events of the Passion. At the Last Supper, Vondel tells us, Christ offered his disciples his body and blood, but under the outward form of bread and wine (547). They, though, were wise enough to see beyond this outward form and trusted in Christ’s words (555), i.e. they believed that when he said ‘This is my body, this is my blood,’ that is literally what he meant. After Christ’s Passion, the disciples continued to celebrate the Eucharist, instituted at the Last Supper. The first such occasion, recorded in the Gospel of Luke 24, was considered to be at the village of Emmaus. I shall not rehearse the entire story here. However, suffice to say that two disciples met Christ near Jerusalem several days after his death, but did not recognize him. They invited him to eat with them and when he broke the bread at the meal, they recognized who he was, but he immediately vanished from their sight. There was a particularly strong sense in which this was considered to be a Eucharistic event in seventeenth century Catholic theology, and incidentally, this may explain the profusion of paintings on the theme painted during this period by artists such as Caravaggio and Jan Steen.⁵² Later in Luke 24, we read that Christ appeared again to his disciples that same evening (vv. 36 ff.) (565-8). In Luke 24:44, Christ says ‘...everything written about me in the law of Moses, the prophets, and the psalms must be fulfilled.’ Luke then writes (v.45) that Christ ‘opened their minds to understand the scriptures.’ It is to these verses that Vondel alludes in lines 568-570.

Notes

543. Although the Copernican revolution which posited that the earth goes round the sun rather than vice versa was in train by this time, it seems that Vondel, at least based on the evidence of his poetry, still held to the Ptolemaic view that the sun goes round the earth.

543. *Heur* (her) is a form that Vondel sometimes uses instead of *haer*.⁵³

544. The significance of this promise is perhaps emphasized by the near rhyme that Vondel achieves in the Dutch in the word *hoofbelofte*.⁵⁴

⁵² See Chapter Six of my *Calvinism and the Arts: A Re-assessment*, *op. cit.*, for a further discussion of this.

⁵³ Van Helten, *op. cit.*, Vormleer 121-2, para. 114.

⁵⁴ Molkenboer ((1907), *op. cit.*, II, 380), suggests that the *hoofbelofte* is a word that Vondel uses to refer to John 6 in this instance (*de ‘hoofbelofte’* (v. 544), *zoals Vondel Joan. VI noemt*), though he more probably means that it is the promise contained in John 6, that, as Vondel understands it, Christ gives of his flesh and blood in the Eucharist, which is indicated by this term.

545. The ‘twice sworn miracle’ refers back to John 6:47 and 53, in which Christ makes the promise of his flesh and blood after the oath, ‘Very truly, I tell you...’ (See commentary on 539 above).

546. A reference to the Last Supper and the institution of the Eucharist.

547. This is a reference to Vondel’s earlier doubts and hesitations about accepting the doctrine of transubstantiation and the truth of the Catholic Mass. He recognizes that for himself as for the disciples at the Last Supper, it was insufficient to rely on the five (Aristotelean) senses. He makes a similar point in the opening lines of his commentary on the title page, *Op de Tittelprint van d’Altaer-Geheimenissen*.⁵⁵

550. The wiser guests are the disciples at the Last Supper (God’s table).

549-551. Two examples of Vondel’s frequent use of polysyndeton in the poem. In 549, he uses *of/ofte* (or) to join four of the five senses together and in 551, where he uses the conjunction *noch* (neither/nor) to join four other words for the same senses to one another.

554. Molkenboer links this line to John 6:69-70, though what the connection is between the words of Peter and an innocent child (*simpel kint*) is not entirely clear.

555-7. In each of these three lines, Vondel includes *donder* (thunder), which has a particularly onomatopoeic feel in the Dutch. This is emphasized by several other words (*dat, de Duif, daelde*), that also begin with a ‘d’.⁵⁶

556. The Dove refers back to Christ’s baptism (e.g. Mark 1:9-11).

556-8. The Father’s (thunderous) voice is heard at the Transfiguration of Christ (Mark 9:7), where it says ‘This is my Son, the Beloved; listen to him!’

559-560. After Christ’s death and subsequent resurrection and ascension, the apostles continued to celebrate the Eucharist, e.g. as recounted in Acts 2:42. Having repeated *donder* three times in lines 555-557 (see above), in these two lines Vondel repeats *Godt* three times for emphasis.

561. Molkenboer notes that Emmaus had been burnt down since John had written his Gospel and replaced by the town of Nicopolis. This is recorded by Baronius in *Annales Ecclesiastici*, 8, 14; 34, 193.

563. When making a simile, Vondel sometimes does not include a word such as like or as (*als/gelijck*), as is the case here.⁵⁷ Elsewhere, though, he does, e.g. *gelijck een zon* (like a sun), 567.

⁵⁵ Cf. *Altaergeheimenissen*, III, 790, *Vijf zinnen gaan te velde tegen God* (Five senses go into battle against God), where there is a clear parallel between Abraham and Vondel himself. See also Brom ((1935), *op. cit.*, 190-1), who writes that Vondel is compelled to bring his senses as a ‘sacrifice’ to his faith. We discuss the place of the senses in this poem more fully in the introduction.

⁵⁶ L. M. Fr. Daniëls wonders whether the reading *donderwoort* may be a printing error and whether instead it should read *wonderwoort* (miraculous word). He provides no substantial evidence for this, though. See *Vondel-kroniek* (1934), jg. 5, 75-77, at 76.

564. *Korstbreuck* (Breaking bread) is one of a number of words coined by Vondel listed in an article by B. H. Molkenboer, concerning the publication of a ‘Scholastic Lexicon’ (*Scholastiek Lexicon*) by Pater Stephanus Axters in 1937, which includes words created by Vondel such as this one.⁵⁸ Vondel also uses the word in his later poem *Bespiegelingen*.⁵⁹

565. *Begost* – this is an old form of *begon* (began) that Vondel uses elsewhere, as in *Altaergeheimenissen, II*, 767.⁶⁰

566. ‘Us’ (*ons*) because John is still speaking here.

568. The ‘old letters’ (*d’oude letters*) are the prophecies of the Old Testament.

569. We learn that in the Book of Exodus, Moses’ face was lit up as a result of encountering God on Mount Sinai. Here, though, Vondel suggests Moses’ face loses its sheen now that the light of Christ’s resurrection has been revealed. Molkenboer refers to Exodus 34:32. The reference is, though, Exodus 34:35.

570. Christ is referred to as the (risen) truth (*opgereze waerheit*).

*Then the truth of the law and its precursors, and the power of all previous shadows and
Prophecies came to pass. (571-686)*

Commentary

(571-580) This short passage acts as an introduction to the section in which Vondel asserts that with the institution of the Eucharist, the true meaning behind the prefigurations of the Old Testament could now clearly be seen. He begins by suggesting (571-572) that the meaning of Christ’s last words on the cross, ‘it is done’ (*’t is volbraght*), was that all the prefigurations had now been fulfilled. He then takes the reader (573-576) to the Temple in Jerusalem. We are told in the Gospel of Matthew 27:50-51, ‘Then Jesus cried again with a loud voice and breathed his last. At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom.’ Vondel places the event within his grand scheme of prefiguration and thing prefigured by saying (575-576) that now the eye could penetrate into the Jewish sanctuary, or Holy of Holies, access to which ordinary priests were denied. Vondel concludes this passage with something of a confession (580) saying that he had seen so much before, but had not understood it, possibly pointing to the time before his conversion to Catholicism.

⁵⁷ Jac. Van Ginneken, ‘De Techniek van Vondels Vergelijkingen met een Kijkje op een Onbelichten Kant van Vondels Zinne-Leven’, in: *Vondel-Kroniek, jg. 1, 1930*, 6-17, at 7. See also van Helten, *op. cit.*, Syntaxis 112, para. 245.

⁵⁸ See ‘Kantteekeningen,’ in: *Vondel-Kroniek, jg. 10, 1939*, 75-78. The lexicon, the *Scholastiek Lexicon Latijn-Nederlandsch*, was published by Geloofsverdediging in Antwerp in 1937. See especially pp. 100-109. Axters goes so far as to say that the best of Vondel’s work was significant for the growth of a specialist scholastic vocabulary in Dutch (p. 100). He also notes (p. 104) that Vondel uses twenty synonyms for Eucharist in this poem.

⁵⁹ *Book V*, l. 1709. See Vondel, *De Werken, Vol. 9*, 642.

⁶⁰ Van Helten, *op. cit.*, Vormleer 31, para. 39e.

Notes

574. The contrast between the Old and New Testament is emphasized by the use of the term Lamb to refer to Christ, as he is replacing the Passover lamb, which was slaughtered in the Old Testament Jewish tradition, and to which Vondel refers as a prefiguration of Christ in lines 170ff.

577-8. Vondel places four short phrases together asyndetically, each of which points to the fact that the Old Testament was now being replaced by the New Testament, and in particular for him in this context, the prefigurations were being replaced by the institution of the Eucharist, the reality to which for Vondel they pointed. Molkenboer points to the *Lauda Sion*, the didactic hymn on the Eucharist composed in 1263 by Thomas Aquinas⁶¹: ‘*Vetustatem novitas, umbram fugat veritas, noctem lux eliminat.*’ (New flees old, truth flees shadow, light eliminates night). Although the language is different in certain respects, the basic idea is similar.

579. Christ is referred to here as the ‘morning sun’ (*morgenzon*).

580. At this point, Vondel intervenes directly with another confession of how he previously had not seen what was now clear to him after his conversion to Catholicism.

Commentary

(Paradise and the Catholic Church)

In this section (581-602), Vondel compares and contrasts the Catholic Church with Paradise, or the Garden of Eden, described in the opening chapters of Genesis. He begins (582-584) by suggesting that Paradise was in some sense a prefiguration of the Church, i.e. for him the Catholic Church, and in particular he sees the tree of life that stood in the middle of the Garden as a prefiguration of the Cross on which Christ was crucified. He then suggests that the food Adam ate was a prefiguration of the heavenly banquet that John and others in heaven (‘we,’ l. 586) now enjoy. In 589-590, Vondel appropriates the language of Eden, but applies it to the Eucharist, with ‘the sweet fruit which grew on the tree of life’ referring to the body of Christ, which hung on the new tree of life, the Cross. He then has John climb up the tree, as the serpent is often pictured climbing a tree in Eden, but rather than following the serpent’s lead in tempting Eve with the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, he offers her the Substance Itself (*’t Wezen zelf*), i.e. the Eucharist, prefigured according to Vondel in the fruit of Eden. In this new Paradise, i.e. the Church, there are none of the perils that afflicted Adam and Eve: no Cherubim with the flaming sword to prevent them from entering (595), no serpents (597), no death (598-599).

Notes

582. Molkenboer reminds us that Augustine, a Church Father whom Vondel held in great esteem,⁶² saw Paradise as a prefiguration of the Church, taking his lead from the concept of the *hortus conclusus* in Song of Songs 4:12.⁶³

⁶¹ Joseph A Jungmann, S. J., *The Mass of the Roman Rite: Its Origins and Development (Missarum Sollemnia)*, trans. Francis A. Brunner, Vol I (New York: Benziger Brothers, 1951), 438.

⁶² It is possible that Vondel based the title of this poem on Augustine’s, *Altaris Sacramenta (Sermo XCV)*, Migne P.L. Vol. Va, col. 584). See Vondel, *De Werken, Deel 4*, 642. Another possibility though is that Vondel

586. This points back to lines 56ff. of the poem, where we learn that Adam had to make do with perishable food, after his expulsion from the Garden of Eden.

587-8. Here (587), as I point out in the commentary above, John is speaking and is asserting that he and those in heaven with him feed forever on a meal merely foreshadowed by the food of Adam. This, taken with the following line (588), in which ‘the open court’ refers to heaven, seems to suggest that Vondel is making a correspondence between Heaven, the eternal paradise, and the Catholic Church, the paradise on earth, and further that the meal that John enjoys in heaven is the same as that enjoyed in the Catholic Church on earth, i.e. the Eucharist, or more specifically the Mass.

588. The pearl gates (*parlepoorten*) refer to the ‘twelve gates [which are] twelve pearls’ of heaven in The Revelation to John 21:21.

589-90. Bellarmine points to the tree of life in Paradise as a prefiguration of the Eucharist.⁶⁴

592. Eve is seen here as the grandmother (*grootmoêr*) of the human race.

593. The Substance Itself (*'t Wezen zelf*) is the body of Christ, of which Catholics believe they partake in the Mass.

595-6. After the expulsion of Adam and Eve from Eden, ‘at the east of the garden of Eden [God] placed [] cherubim, and a sword flaming and turning to guard the way to the tree of life’ (Genesis 3:24).

600. In the Dutch, the words for ‘ripe’ and ‘dew’ are homonyms (*rijp*). Molkenboer suggests that this repetition is not intentional and argues that such unintentional repetition is common in Vondel’s poetry. I am not so sure it can so easily be dismissed as unintentional, for certainly in this case it may merely represent Vondel playing with language. I would suggest that given the vast vocabulary at his disposal he could avoid such ‘unhappy coincidences’ if he chose so to do.

Commentary

(Melchizedek)

After discussing the the Garden of Eden as a prefiguration of the Catholic Church, Vondel moves onto show how Christ fulfilled the prefiguration of the Old Testament figure of Melchizedek (603-616). Earlier in Book I (ll. 79 ff.), he discussed how Melchizedek was a prefiguration of Christ and now we see how the prefiguration is fulfilled. The reader will recall that in Genesis 14:18, Melchizedek, King of Salem, brought out bread and wine to Abram, as Abraham was called at this point, and his army. Now, though, a new Melchizedek, Christ (603-604), comes to meet us, but not with mere bread and wine, rather

is responding to the title of a polemical treatise against Catholic Eucharistic theology by Walich Syvaerts., *Roomsche Mysterien ontdekt* (Roman Mysteries Uncovered), published in Amsterdam in 1604.

⁶³ Cf. Frijns, *op. cit.*, 582. See also Vondel’s 1663 poem *De Heerlyckheit der Kercke* (Vondel, *De Werken, Deel 9*, 799ff.), where the poet refers to *De pen van Augustijn, van onwaerdeerbren prijs* (the pen of Augustine, of inestimable value) (line 223) and recalls Augustine’s parallel between the church and paradise (224).

⁶⁴ Bellarmine, *op. cit.*, 743C.

with ‘the food from his own body’ (605), which has the power to give eternal life (606). In Genesis 14:20, we read that in return Abram gave Melchizedek one-tenth of everything he had, but now we are exhorted (609) to bring the new Melchizedek, Christ, more than a tenth, i.e. to worship him with our body and soul. Vondel, or rather John the Evangelist who is still speaking, concludes the section by asking that Christ’s self-offering strengthens the church militant (the heroes) (613), and assists it in its journey towards heaven.

Notes

603-4. In Hebrews 5:6-10, we learn that Christ is a High Priest in the order of Melchizedek. See also note to line 85 above.

607-8. Here Vondel enumerates three evils that humanity has to contend with on earth: the flesh (concupiscence), the world, and the devil (referred to here as ‘the abyss,’ as the Dutch has *De[] afgront[]*). In a poem by Vondel’s Calvinist contemporary, Constantijn Huygens, we find reference to *drij vijanden* (three enemies), which one commentator, F. L. Zwaan, enumerates as *de oude mens, de wereld, de duivel* (the old self (cf. flesh), the world, the devil).⁶⁵ Zwaan refers to the three as *de bekende trits* (the well-known triad), suggesting these three evils have often been placed together in the Christian tradition. Molkenboer suggests that John is pointing to a passage in the bible which he may well have written: I John 2:16.⁶⁶ Here, John implores readers not to love the world, and he clarifies what he means by this with ‘the desire of the flesh, the desire of the eyes, the pride in riches.’⁶⁷ This is certainly a triad, though it is somewhat different to that which both Vondel and Huygens refer.

609. ‘Him’ (*hem*) refers to Christ.

611. ‘Jerusalem’s leader’ (*hooft van Salem*) is Melchizedek.

612. A direct address to Christ, who for Christians is the ‘King of righteousness and peace.’

613. Christ’s sacrifice was the one made on the Cross, but in Catholic theology this sacrifice is recalled and is said to be re-enacted in the celebration of the Mass.

614. Reference to the vision of peace as heaven recalls Ezekiel 13:16 (Vulgate: *visio[] pacis*).

Commentary

(The unleavened bread and the Paschal lamb)

After revealing the true significance of the prefiguration contained in the figure of Melchizedek, Vondel turns (618-632) to the prefigurations of the unleavened bread and the Paschal lamb, which he discussed earlier in the poem (ll. 99ff. and 169ff.). As with other passages in this section, Vondel does not so much indicate a complete break with the past but

⁶⁵ Constantijn Huygens, *Avondmaalsgedichten en Heilige Dagen, ed. and intro. F. L. Zwaan* (Zwolle: W.E.J. Tjeenk Willink, 1968), 78, Poem 15, l. 19. See also my book, *Poems on the Lord’s Supper by the Dutch Calvinist Constantijn Huygens (1596-1687): A Facing Dutch-English Translation with Annotations and an Introduction by Christopher Joby* (Lampeter: Edwin Mellen Press, 2008), 86-87, l. 19.

⁶⁶ Some modern commentators, however, cast doubt on this, although there are those who at least acknowledge that the book derives from the community around John.

⁶⁷ Vulgate: *concupiscentia carnis et concupiscentia oculorum [] et superbia vitae*.

rather talks in terms of how the prefiguration of the Old Testament had something in common with what superseded it in the New Testament. So in lines 619-620, he uses the language of the Jewish rites when talking of ‘unleavened loaves’ (*ongezuurde brooden*) and the Lamb (*Lam*), but makes it clear that he is now talking of the bread of the Eucharist (of purity and truth (620)) and of Christ, the Lamb of God, who took all the sin of the world on himself (621). Pushing this analogy further, in line 623, he contrasts the action of the Jews, who daubed their lintels and doorposts with lamb’s blood, so that the angel of death would pass over their houses (Exodus 12:21 ff.), with how Christians should act, i.e. daubing their hearts, figuratively speaking, with the blood of the new Lamb, Christ. From lines 626 onwards, Vondel turns to polemic and states quite categorically that anyone who still holds to the Jewish customs (628-629) will not be able to partake in what the new Lamb has to offer. He concludes with an aphorism (632) which encapsulates the sentiments behind the contrast between prefiguration and that which is prefigured.

Notes

617. Molkenboer draws a comparison between the ‘old feasts’ (*oude feesten*), to which Vondel refers, and I Corinthians 5:8, where Paul writes ‘let us celebrate the festival, not with the old yeast, the yeast of malice and evil, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.’

618. It may be reading too much into Vondel’s use of language, but it is rare for him to use a phrase such as ‘the Lord’s table’ (*’s Heeren disch*) to refer to the altar, or to the Eucharist more generally. Indeed, this seems to have more in common with the language used by Calvinists to refer to the Eucharist, cf. *’s Heeren Avondmael* (the Lord’s Supper), a term which the Calvinist, Constantijn Huygens uses as a title for several of his poems on the Eucharist.⁶⁸

621-2. Molkenboer suggests that Vondel’s use of this imagery goes back to the symbols of bread and fish in the early Church and notes that we find it also in the work of the medieval mystic, Jan Ruusbroec, and that of the sixteenth-century poet, Anna Bijns, as well as more recently in the work of the nineteenth-century Flemish poet and priest, Guido Gezelle.⁶⁹

624. cf. Huygens’ poem *Paeschen* (Passover), where in line 13, he implores Christ to ‘mark the door of our hearts’ (*Merckt onser herten deur*), i.e. with his own blood.⁷⁰

626. ‘We’ (*wy*) refers to John and his fellow disciples who received the bread and wine from Christ’s hand at the Last Supper. This is repeated in line 633.

627. Molkenboer notes that the phrase ‘From Christ’s hand’ (*Uit Kristus hant*) and the phrase ‘from God’s hand’ (*uit Godts hant*) recall the line from the *Pangue lingua: Cibum se dat suis manibus* (He gives himself as food with his own hands), and a line from a sermon by Augustine of Hippo *Caenam manibus suis consecratam discipulis dedit* (He gave the consecrated supper to his disciples with his own hands).

⁶⁸ Joby (2008), *op. cit.*, 38 ff.

⁶⁹ See also Molkenboer (1907), IV, 155-6.

⁷⁰ Zwaan, *op. cit.*, 104.

627-9. Here, Vondel refers to those who still follow the Jewish customs as ‘slave[s] to the law’ and those ‘still serv[ing] in Levi’s tent’. Only those ‘free of Aaron’s ties’ i.e. free of the Jewish customs, can partake in the Eucharist.

630. Reference to those who ‘devote themselves to richer wheatfields’ echoes Isaiah 30:23, where the prophet says that the Lord will provide Israel with ‘grain, which will be rich and plenteous.’

Commentary

(The firstfruits, shewbread and other prefigurations)

After discussing the prefigurations of the unleavened bread and the Paschal lamb, Vondel moves onto discuss other prefigurations of the Eucharist from the Old Testament (633-654), including the firstfruits of the harvest (634), the shewbread (636), the bread in the dream of Gideon (644), and the bread which the widow at Zarephath was able to give Elijah (645). He intersperses these references with assertions concerning the benefits which accrue to those who partake of the Eucharist, in lines 637, 642 and 646-654.

Notes

633. ‘The body’ is the body of Christ. ‘From God’s hand’: see line 627 above, which refers to Christ’s hand. The belief was still current amongst Catholic theologians in the seventeenth century that it was Christ himself who offered communicants his own body at the partaking of the Eucharist.⁷¹

634-5. The idea here is that the first sheaf of wheat and the first fruits of the harvest offered by the Jews in the Old Testament were now superseded as a sacrifice by the institution of the Eucharist. See lines 101-103 for an earlier mention of these as a prefiguration of the Eucharist.

636. The shewbread placed in the Holy of Holies is another Old Testament prefiguration of the Eucharist which Vondel previously referred to in lines 122ff. above and recapitulated in line 529. The ordinances regarding the shewbread are given in Leviticus 24:5ff.

637. It is interesting to note that Vondel refers to those who receive the Eucharist as ‘more worthy’ guests than the Jews who took part in the ceremonies of the Old Testament. We should ask in what sense these guests are ‘more worthy,’ for by Vondel’s own account the Eucharist itself, or more specifically, the Mass, confers spiritual benefits on those who partake of it, so one might reasonably ask to what extent such guests are already worthy. It is also interesting to contrast this view with that of the Calvinist, Constantijn Huygens, who wrote the following epigram on the Lord’s Supper:

I am not worthy Lord to sit at your table.
But sit here now to feel more worthy.
If only those who were completely worthy of you sat here,
Then your table, good God, would stand empty and alone.⁷²

⁷¹ John B. Knipping, *Iconography of the Counter Reformation in the Netherlands, Vol. II* (Nieuwkoop: B. de Graaf, 1974), 303.

⁷² Joby (2008), *op. cit.*, 92-93.

Vondel may argue that those who come to the altar of the new recension, i.e. for him Catholics, are by definition more worthy than the Jews of the Old Testament, but one could argue that this is only by the grace of God. Perhaps it reminds us of how some words in a context such as this need to be used with care.

640. The Calvinist Huygens too talks of the need for true repentance before approaching the Lord's Table and says that at the root of this lies the intention (*Het voornemen/ Het opzet*) to change one's old ways.⁷³

641. (*Het*) *Heilighdom* has a range of meanings, but here specifically refers to the Eucharistic Host. The poet Jacob Westerbaen also uses it in this way.

642ff. In relation to line 642, A. H. J. van Delft tells us that the bread of the Eucharist contains 'in reality' (*zakelijk*) the miracles which the prefigurations of the Old Testament could only point to.⁷⁴ Vondel now goes on to recapitulate these prefigurations.

643. The bread of Priest and Prophet is respectively the bread of Melchizedek (see 79ff. and 529 above) and that of Elijah (305ff. and 530).

644. *'t legerbroot*, which I have translated as 'the bread of the host' as a play on words, refers to the bread which appeared to Gideon in a dream rolling into the enemy camp and which was interpreted as a sign that he would defeat the Midianites in battle. Vondel discusses this above in lines 361ff. and 531-2.

645. The widow referred to here is the one whom Elijah came across at Zarephath (I Kings 17). She had very little bread and water, but was able to feed herself and Elijah for many days.

646-650. Vondel contrasts the bread of the Eucharist with the bread of the prefigurations he has just enumerated.

648. 'The abyss' (*De[] afgront[]*) refers to the devil. Cf. line 608 above.

649-650. In I Kings 19, Elijah is fed by an angel of the Lord and this strengthens him sufficiently to be able to continue his journey for forty days and forty nights (v. 8). However, the bread of the Eucharist strengthens the body for longer, even beyond death. Molkenboer reminds us that the bread of the Eucharist sows in the body a seed of immortality (*semen immortalitatis*), by the power of which the faithful will be resurrected to eternal life (cf. John 6:55).

654. Cf. Philippians 3:8, 'I regard [everything] as rubbish (Vulgate: *stercora*), in order that I may gain Christ.'

Commentary

(Prefigurations of the Eucharist from the life of David the Psalmist and prophecies in the Old Testament pointing to the sacrament)

⁷³ *ibid.*, Poem 9, 66-67, esp. ll. 34-35.

⁷⁴ Vondel, *Altaergeheimenissen*, ed. A. H. J. van Delft (Hilversum: Brand, 1924), 63.

In these lines (655-680), Vondel continues to discuss how numerous passages of the Old Testament point to the Eucharist, instituted in the New Testament. He begins by recalling the notion of the feast on the mountain of the Old Testament, which he has already referred to in lines 376 and 533. Such a feast is referred to at several points in the Old Testament, but of particular note is the feast of David, which Vondel focuses on in lines 665ff.⁷⁵ Feasts such as that of David are of course prefigurations of the Eucharist and in line 670, Vondel, through John who is still speaking, refers specifically to the Last Supper at which it is believed that the Eucharist was instituted. John then addresses the faithful as ‘eagles’ (*adelaers*) and exhorts them to gather at the Lord’s table to partake of the ‘choicest food’ (678), i.e. the bread of the Eucharist, which although having the appearance of normal bread, has been transformed on consecration into the heavenly food of Christ’s flesh and blood.

Notes

655. Cf. lines 376 and 533. Zeij also points to Deuteronomy 33:9, although the reference should be 33:19.⁷⁶ ‘They call peoples to the mountain; there they offer the right sacrifice.’

658. ‘For all his fellow members’ refers to the faithful, who are the members of the body of Christ (Ephesians 5:30).

659. Zechariah 9:17 talks of ‘new wine (making) the young women (flourish)’ (Vulgate: *vinum germinans virgines*). Zeij incorrectly gives the biblical reference as Jeremiah 9:17.⁷⁷

660. Molkenboer points to the argument of Thomas Aquinas in his *Summa Theologiae* (III, LXXXIII, 5) as to why Christ instituted the Eucharist at the end (‘till last’) (*op ’t lest*) of his life, although it is not at all clear either from the note or from a reading of the passage in Aquinas’ work why Molkenboer points the reader to this section of the *Summa*.

661. Zeij points to Isaiah 5:4, where God asks his people, ‘What more was there to do for my vineyard, that I have not yet done in it?’ The word that Vondel uses here for ‘could’ is *kost*. He uses this elsewhere, but also uses the form *kon*, which is standard in modern Dutch.⁷⁸

664. Cf. Psalm 34:8 (NRSV): ‘O taste and see that the Lord is good.’ Molkenboer gives the reference for this as Psalm 30:9. This is incorrect, for in the Vulgate (*gustate et videte quoniam bonus Dominus*) the reference is Psalm 33:9.

665-8. Cf. Psalm 23:5 (NRSV): ‘You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies,’⁷⁹ and refer to the title page of the 1645 edition of this poem, on which David is pictured playing a stringed instrument.⁸⁰

⁷⁵ In the introduction to his commentary, Molkenboer draws attention to correspondences that Vondel no doubt saw between himself and David: as a prophet of the Holy Sacrament, a poet in praise of God and a slayer of an enemy – Goliath in David’s case and Calvin in Vondel’s, whom he refers to as a Goliath in line 1151. In this regard, we should remember that it is David who is pictured with a lyre on the frontispiece of the first edition of the poem, and that the cryptic reference to his own name, *Justus fide vivit*, means not only ‘Justus (Joost)/the righteous man lives by faith,’ but also ‘Joost lives by the lyre.’

⁷⁶ Zeij, *op. cit.*, 37. Vulgate: *populos ad montem vocabunt ibi immolabunt victimas iustitiae*.

⁷⁷ *ibid.*

⁷⁸ For examples of where Vondel uses *kost* and where he uses *kon*, see van Helten, *op. cit.*, Vormleer 36, para. 47.

⁷⁹ Molkenboer correctly compares this with Psalm 22:5 in the Vulgate: *parasti in conspectu meo mensam adversus eos qui tribulant me*.

670-1. Molkenboer finds an echo of the liturgy here: *memoriam fecit mirabilium suorum, escam dedit timentibus se* ('He has gained renown by his wonderful deeds, he provided food to those who fear him'). Both Molkenboer and Zeij point to the passage in the Psalms which runs 'He has gained renown by his wonderful deeds; the LORD is gracious and merciful. He provide[d] food for those who fear him' (Vulgate: *memoriam fecit mirabilium suorum misericors et miserator Dominus escam dedit timentibus se*). Molkenboer gives the correct Vulgate reference of Psalm 110:4-5, whilst Zeij is incorrect with the reference Psalm 10:4. 'His friends' (670) are the disciples who, along with John, were with Christ at the Last Supper.

673. On his deathbed, the patriarch Jacob prophesied of his son Asher: 'Asher's food shall be rich, and he shall provide royal delicacies,' which in Vondel's scheme can be taken as another prefiguration of the Eucharist. Molkenboer points to this passage, but gives an incorrect reference of Genesis 40 (XL):20. The correct reference is Genesis 49:20.

674. 'You eagles' refer to the souls that want to seek salvation through partaking of the Eucharist. Molkenboer points to Matthew 24:28 as a possible inspiration for this metaphor. This is certainly in keeping with the Vulgate version of the verse, which also refers eagles (*aquilae*). The *Statenbijbel*, which was primarily a Calvinist bible, and which was in circulation by the time that Vondel was writing this poem, also has *arenden* (eagles). However, two modern versions of the bible, the NRSV and the Dutch *Nieuwe Bijbelvertaling* have 'vultures' and *gieren* (vultures) respectively. One modern commentator notes that the Greek New Testament, to which incidentally Vondel probably did not refer, has *hoi aetoi*, and says that this may refer to either eagles or vultures, and that the two were often classed together.⁸¹ However, I would suggest that which word is chosen here is of importance for it is vultures which are much more commonly associated with feeding on the carrion mentioned in Matthew 24:28. That said, for Vondel the birds need to be eagles, for it was the eagle which it was believed was the only bird that could stare right into the light of the sun (line 676).⁸²

677. *Kristbeminden* ('beloved by Christ') is one of Vondel's many new coinages in this poem.

This points to the Bees in the arms of His Holiness URBAAN the Eighth (687-728)

Commentary

I include in this commentary remarks on 681-686, as they provide an introduction to this section. Lines 681-702 are a tour de force of Vondel's poetic imagination which uses the motive of honey to develop a conceit which draws together several strands of his argument in defence of the Catholic Mass. Jac. Zeij may well be right that Vondel takes his inspiration for this section from an etching by Rubens,⁸³ though this should not detract from our admiration for the quality of this poetry. He begins the section by referring to Christ as the Lion of (the

⁸⁰ See Plate II in Zeij, *op. cit.*

⁸¹ Donald Hagner, *Matthew 14-28, Word Biblical Commentary, Volume 33B* (Dallas: Word Books, 1995), 707.

⁸² For this reason and for the fact that the eagle was believed to be able to fly higher than any other bird, it was often associated with Christ. See Joby (2007), *op. cit.*, 133.

⁸³ See Plate XI and pp. 38-39 in Zeij, *op. cit.*

tribe of) Judah, drawing on the language of Revelation 5:5. This allusion allows the poet to move from discussing the idea of the faithful partaking of Christ in the Eucharist in the preceding lines to the notion that the consecrated elements have something in common with honey. He is able to do this by relying on the reader to make the connection between a lion and honey in the story of Samson in Judges 14, which Vondel has previously referred to in this poem in lines 351-3 and 531. Into this mix, he draws the motive of the Catholic Church as a beehive (687) and Pope Urban VIII, Maffeo Barberini, whose family emblems included the bee. The food offered on the Eucharistic altar though of course differs from ordinary honey in that it ‘flows forever’ (696) and its praises will be sung by those who partake of it. Vondel concludes the section (701-2) with a description of the Pope, presiding over the celebration of the Mass, no doubt in St. Peter’s Basilica, dressed in all the finery associated with his position.

Notes

682-3. Christ is the strong Lion who overcame death: ‘caused death to shriek.’

684. For Catholics, on the night before he died, Christ gave his disciples to eat of his flesh and blood (‘gives up honey in [his] death rattle’).

685. The idea that the food which Christ gave at the Last Supper and continues to give in the Eucharist comes down from heaven is drawn here into a parallel with the action of bees sucking pollen out of a flower from which they make honey.

687. ‘You bees’ are Catholics. The Catholic Church was sometimes referred to as a beehive, hence the title of an attack on the Catholic Church by the arch-Calvinist, Marnix van St.-Aldegonde, entitled *Den Byencorf der H. Roomische Kercke* (‘The Beehive of the Holy Roman Church’), published in 1569, which in particular attacks sacramental practice in the Catholic Church.⁸⁴ Vondel also refers to *Christe bijen* (Christ’s bees) in another poem, *De Kruisbergh*, (The Mount of the Cross), line 22.⁸⁵

Reference to bees also allows Vondel to introduce Pope Urban VIII into his narrative. Urban was a member of the powerful Barberini family, one of whose symbols was the bee. Mention of Urban is one of the few contemporary references that we find in the whole of this poem. Indeed, Vondel refers to Urban at four other points in the poem (Book I, 1063; II 1031 ff., II 1274 ff.; III 5). The final reference allows us to assert with a reasonable degree of confidence that Vondel had started Book III by (29th) July 1644, when Urban died.⁸⁶

688ff. Now Vondel likens the altar to a flower, whose scent attracts the bees, and from which they suck the pollen. The pollen is of course instead the consecrated bread of the Eucharist.

⁸⁴ See F. E. Beemon, ‘Poisonous Honey or Pure Manna: The Eucharist and the Word in the “Beehive” of Marnix of Saint Aldegonde,’ in *Church History*, Vol. 61, No. 4 (Dec., 1992), pp. 382-393. Molkenboer also suggests that Vondel may well have had Marnix’ polemical work in mind when referring to bees here. He goes further than this in fact and suggests that what Vondel might be doing here and in further references to bees in the poem (I, 1596 ff. and II, 1031 ff.) is righting an injustice, whereby Marnix was parodying the earlier thirteenth-century work *Biënboec (der byen boeck)* by Thomas van Cantimpré (Molkenboer (1907), IV, 144-7). Frijns (*op. cit.*, 399) also writes that Marius calls *honigh baijtgens* (little honey bees) examples of purity.

⁸⁵ ‘The Christian bees hurry with longing towards the rose garden.’ (*De Christe byen met verlangen // Sich spoeden naer dien roosengaard*). Vondel, *De Kruisbergh. Aen Magdalene Baeck*, in: *De Werken, op. cit.*, Deel 3, 602.

⁸⁶ Cf. Brom (1935), *op. cit.*, 238.

689. 'All the Roman courts' (*al de Roomsche hoven*) refers to the entire Catholic Church.

691. A reference to daily communion.

693. 'Honey-wings' (*honighvliegers*) is another compound noun formed by Vondel. This refers to the bees.

694-5. 'Drop and dew' (*drup en dauw*) is hendiadys for 'dewdrop.' The morpheme *dauw* is repeated in 695, again as the fourth syllable, in *honighdauw* 'honey dew.'

697-8. Molkenboer makes a parallel with a passage from a homily on Luke 14 by Gregory the Great: *Spiritaes deliciae tanto a comedente amplius esuriuntur, quanto et ab esuriente comeduntur* (Spiritual foods are hungered after so much the more by the eater, than they are eaten by those who hunger).

698. Pope Urban VIII (the Father) was a composer of hymns and had many church hymns updated.⁸⁷

699. 'All the city' (*al de stadt*) refers to Rome.

700. It is interesting that Vondel considers Urban to be 'like a Deity' (*gelijck een Godtheit*). Of course, he is saying Urban is *like* a deity and not a deity himself, but Calvinists might get a sense of idolatry here, something which Vondel would doubtless reject.⁸⁸

Commentary

(Manna)

This section (703-728) provides an introduction to the focus on one particular prefiguration, the Manna which rained down on the Israelites and fed them in the wilderness described in Exodus 16. In lines 729-796, Vondel compares and contrasts the Jewish and the Christian Manna, but here he begins by saying that Christ provided all that was foreshadowed by the Jewish Manna, which for Vondel was the perfect prefiguration of the Eucharist. The meaning of the prefiguration was revealed by Christ at the Last Supper (710-11). If this had not been so, John tells Vondel directly (714-718), he would not have the Eucharist to console him. He concludes the section by saying he is now going to compare and contrast the Jewish Manna and the Christian Eucharist, in order, as he says that 'the greatest thing,' i.e. the Eucharist, may be glorified by 'the least,' i.e. the Jewish Manna.

⁸⁷ Molkenboer notes that Urban also wrote Latin *Poemata* (published in Rome in 1631), which Vondel himself praised. In the poem *Danckoffer aen David De Willem*, he writes *Wie [Apollo] will zoecken, zoeck Urbaen, // Die op de seven bergen pronckt, // En 't Christelijcke hart ontvonckt, // Wanneer hy weigen gaat soo breet, // En Kallioop in purper kleedt.* (Vondel, *De Werken, Deel 3*, 394, ll. 15-20) (Part 3, p. 394) The publication of Urban's poems would also seem to have been the occasion which inspired Rubens' etching, although it is dated 1634.

⁸⁸ Vondel asks *Wat Godheit vol ontsaghs is dit...?* (What Divinity full of awe is this...?) in line 1 of a poem *Op Urbaen den Achtste* (On Urban the Eighth), written in 1625. See Vondel, *De Werken, op. cit., Deel 2*, 495.

Notes

703. ‘The same hand’ (*De zelve hant*) refers to the hand of Christ, which, it was believed, distributed Christ’s body in the celebration of the Catholic Mass. See also 626 and 633 above.

708. ‘The ancients’ (*d’ouden*) refers to Ancient Israel.

710. ‘His Testament’ (*Zijn Testament*) refers both to the New Testament, which records the life, death and resurrection of Christ and the institution of the Eucharist, and to Christ’s testament in terms of a will, which he made clear at the Last Supper.

711. ‘Us’ (*ons*) includes John the Evangelist who is still talking at this point.

714-5. References to Christ as the light of the world and the light shining in the darkness are several in the Gospel of John, such as 1:5 and 8:12. See 661 above for the use of *kost* (could).

715ff. John is addressing Vondel directly here.

718. ‘The fruit of the images’ (*de vrucht der beelden*) refers to the fulfillment of the prefigurations.

720-1. This is the core of Vondel’s argument here. If all the prefigurations to which Vondel has referred had not been prefigurations of some greater reality, i.e. the consecrated, transubstantiated elements in the Mass, then they would have been as nothing. In his commentary on these lines, Molkenboer has a different emphasis. He suggests that they mean that if the bread of the Last Supper had not been the body of Christ, as Catholics believe Christ himself asserted, but rather a mere sign of his body, then a deception would have been perpetrated, as there could have been no prefiguration of something which ultimately had no more value than the prefigurations themselves. In truth, there is little difference between these perspectives except that Molkenboer places the weight of the fulfillment of the prefigurations on the Last Supper, whereas I prefer to see Vondel as referring to celebrations of the Mass more generally.

722. See lines 225ff. above for Vondel’s colourful description of the Manna falling on the camp of the Israelites in the wilderness which significantly embellishes the biblical text.

722-3. Vondel says that if the bread of the Eucharist (or by Molkenboer’s account, the Last Supper (see 720-1 above)) were just that, bread, then in fact the Jews would have been better off than Christians, for at least the Manna that comes to them in Exodus 16 is sweet, rather than a mere ‘grain of wheat’ (*graen van ’t ackerkoren*). He makes this point again later (954-5). However, this opens up another discussion on whether Vondel’s opponents, here clearly the Calvinists, really did see the bread of their celebration of the Eucharist, the Lord’s Supper, as a mere grain of wheat. If we take Vondel’s fellow poet, the Calvinist Constantijn Huygens, as a case in point, the evidence is not at all clear. In a Latin poem from 1643, Huygens calls the bread ‘a feeble crumb of wheat’ (*mica vilis tritici*).⁸⁹ Elsewhere, though,

⁸⁹ Joby (2008), *op. cit.*, 40-41, Poem 2, l. 11.

he talks of ‘the holy bread’ (*’t heiligh Brood*), and refers to the Eucharistic wine as ‘healing dew’ (*heilsaem Natt*).⁹⁰

723-4. ‘The bread, which appeared to us’ is the bread of the Eucharist, which when consecrated, substantially becomes the flesh of Christ, who appeared to John and his fellow disciples on earth.

728. As often the case in this poem, Vondel concludes with an aphorism, which either encapsulates what has gone before, or, as here, anticipates what is coming next.

Comparison of the Jewish and Christian Manna, and the difference between them (729-796)

Commentary

The first contrast (730-731) is that whereas the Jewish Manna only fed the Jews in the wilderness, the Eucharist can feed Jew and Gentile alike. The second contrast (732-735) is that whereas the Manna fed the Jews after they had passed through the Red Sea, the Eucharist feeds all those who are baptized and thus cleansed of sin. The third contrast (736-743) concerns the way in which each came to earth: whereas the Manna lay on the ground in the morning white, like frost, the other came through Mary’s womb. The final contrast (744-750) is that whilst the Manna only supported the Israelites for the forty years during which they were in the wilderness, the Eucharist feeds the soul unto eternal life.

Notes

729. As the previous section concluded with an aphorism, so this section begins with one. Both Zeij and Molkenboer consider this as the first difference that Vondel enumerates, i.e. that the Eucharist is a greater miracle than that of the Manna in the Old Testament, and I see no reason to dispute this.

729ff. Molkenboer provides a detailed account of the sources of the contrasts between the Manna and Christ as the bread of life. These include John 6:31;49;51;58, and commentaries by Ambrose of Milan⁹¹ and Augustine of Hippo.

735. The water here is the water of baptism. Molkenboer notes that Paul’s comparison of baptism, which gains power through the cleansing power of Christ’s blood, with the Red Sea,⁹² was a particular favourite of Augustine of Hippo. Paul makes the comparison in I Corinthians 10:1.

⁹⁰ *ibid.*, 78-79, Poem 13, l. 2. I discuss Huygens’ understanding of the Eucharistic elements in an essay ‘Constantijn Huygens: Poet as Theologian’ in: *Return to Sender*, eds. Jürgen Pieters et al. (Amsterdam: AUP) forthcoming.

⁹¹ Ambrose, *De Mysteriis, Liber Unus, Caput VIII, Migne P. L., Vol. XVI* (Paris: 1845), cols. 404-405: *Considera nunc...utrum praestantior sit panis angelorum, an caro Christi, quae utique corpus est vitae. Manna illud e caelo, hoc supra caelo: illud caeli, hoc Domini caelorum: illud corruptioni obnoxium, si in diem alterum servaretur: hoc alienum ab omni corruptione.*

⁹² In his sonnet, *Paeschen* (Passover), in the cycle *Heilighe Dagen*, (Holy Days), Constantijn Huygens refers to the Red Sea in a similar vein, though he goes on to push the imagery further than Vondel does in this instance. In line seven of the poem, Huygens says ‘We have escaped slavery through the Red Sea’ (*Wij zijn door ‘troode Meer de slavernij ontweken*), which suggests that Christians have escaped the slavery of sin by passing through the waters of baptism, compared to the Red Sea, and here we see a parallel with the imagery of Paul

736. '[The] one' (*Het eene*) is the Manna.

737. 'The other' (*het ander*) is Christ.

739. Joseph's Bride is the Virgin Mary.⁹³

740. Christ's nativity is recounted in Luke 2, with reference to angelic hosts singing God's glory in vv. 13-14.

742. Isaiah 9:6 refers to a child as Prince of Peace, which is taken in the Christian tradition as a prophecy of the birth of Christ.

743. 'House of Bread' (*broothuis*) is a literal translation of Bethlehem, where Christ was born.⁹⁴

747. Within this contrast lies another contrast that whereas the Jews reached a land called Canaan after forty years in the wilderness, the true Canaan, for Vondel, is heaven, which can only be reached by partaking of the Eucharist, and not merely by partaking of the manna in the wilderness, as the Jews did.

748. 'Unveiled Manna' (*onbenevelt Man*) is an interpretation of the 'hidden manna' (Vulgate: *manna absconditum*) of Revelation 2:17.

Commentary

(Four points of comparison between the Jewish Manna and the Eucharist)

After a number of differences between the Manna of Exodus 16 and the Eucharist, Vondel now lists four similarities between them (751-766) before going onto provide a further two contrasts (767-796). The first comparison (751-754) is that both are for everyone, regardless of rank. The second comparison (755-756) is that everyone who partakes of the Manna or the Eucharist does so to the same extent. The third comparison (757-758) is that those who are not righteous do not truly taste the Manna or the Eucharist and the fourth comparison (759-766) is by contrast that the righteous will gain benefits when they partake of the Manna or Eucharist.

Notes

752-3. To make his point that the Eucharist is open to all, Vondel balances three groups of opposites: great and small, rich and poor and Kings and slaves, joining each member of each group with the conjunction 'and' (*en*) and each group to the next group with the same conjunction, as if banging the drum until we get his point.

appropriated by Vondel. However, in lines 9-10, Huygens seems to suggest that we are in a sea of our own blood, i.e. our own sinfulness, which is much rougher than the Red Sea (Oh! In the middle of the waves, // The waves of our blood, much rougher than that sea (*Oh! Midden in de baren, // De baren van ons bloed, veel holler dan dat meer.*)). We would drown in this sea of our own sinful blood, but for the blood of Christ shed on the Cross.

⁹³ Frijns (*op. cit.*, 400) notes that the trope of likening Mary's womb is one used by Ambrose of Milan, and suggests several possible sources of inspiration for the trope.

⁹⁴ Frijns (*op. cit.*, 401) notes that Marius had made this connection in a sermon in 1644, although of course others have also previously made the connection.

752. 'The bread of sacrifice' (*'t offerbroot*) is the Eucharistic bread.

753. Cf. *Manducat Dominum pauper, servus et humilis* (Pauper, slave and humble person eat the Lord) from the *Sacris solemnibus*.

756. This echoes the phrase in the *Lauda Sion, Quantum isti, tantum ille* 'As much for this one as for that one', i.e. each will get the same share.

760-1. Here, Vondel works with the notion that the Eucharist is in some sense a heavenly feast.

762-3. Vondel again makes the point (see the introductory poem, *Op de Tittelprint*, esp. ll. 1-4, and lines 547-9 above) that it is not the senses which allow one to grasp the truth of the Eucharist, but faith.

764-5. Here, Vondel starts consecutive lines with Emmanuel (*Emanuël*) for emphasis.

766. Cf. Matthew 11:28, where Christ says 'Come to me, all you that are weary...and I will give you rest.'

Commentary

(Two further differences between the Jewish Manna and the Eucharist)

In this final section on the Manna (767-796), Vondel details at length two further differences between it and the Eucharist instituted by Christ. The first of these (767-775) is that whereas the Manna (was said to be) prepared by Angels, the elements of the Eucharist are administered by Priests. The second difference (776-790) is that whereas Manna was a material substance that could not protect those who ate it from death, the Eucharist plants a seed of immortality in the bodies of those who eat it which acts as a security for them on the day of the resurrection of the dead. Vondel concludes the section (791-796) by saying that no outward appearance will prevent the faithful from seeing the divine nature of the new Manna, i.e. the consecrated bread of the Mass.

Notes

767. Cf. lines 215-216 and 225ff. There is no mention of the Manna being prepared by angels in Exodus 16.

769. 'The true Manna' (*'t ware Man*) is the bread of the Eucharist.

770. The Dutch word *geheimspijsofferanden*, which I translate as 'mysterious sacrifices,' is another of Vondel's coinages. Molkenboer is probably correct to say that Vondel may be drawing on the language of I Corinthians 4:1, which talks of 'the stewards of God's mysteries' (Vulgate: *dispensatores mysteriorum Dei*), though this would be the case for the whole line, rather than merely the final word, as Molkenboer seems rather ambiguously to suggest.

771. As one commentator notes, Vondel sometimes uses the word ‘is’ (*is*) for ‘is like’ (*is als/gelijk*),⁹⁵ and this is what we see here. It is doubtful whether Vondel is saying that the priests are in fact, or have equivalence in every regard to, God’s Angels. Rather, he means that the priests act as or are like God’s Angels to the extent that they carry out tasks ordained by God, in this case the administering of the sacraments.

772. The use of the term Stadholders (*stadthouders*) here is very interesting, and adds a certain amount of local colour. The term is little known and little understood outside the Low Countries, but refers to the title given to the leaders of the United Provinces at this time. In the first half of the 1640s, during which Vondel composed this poem, the Stadholder was Frederik Hendrik, the son of the leader of the Dutch revolt, William of Orange, and half-brother of the previous Stadholder, Maurits. Although they affirmed Calvinism more than other Christian denominations, Vondel seems to have had a positive view of Frederik Hendrik.⁹⁶ Stadholders were considered by many, though not necessarily by all, to have been the anointed rulers of the United Provinces, and so Vondel draws an analogy between the Priests, in whom are vested the duties of administering the sacraments, with the Stadholders, in whom are vested the duties of state.

‘The Anointed One’ (*[’s] Gezalfde[n]*) is Jesus, whose names Messiah and Christ both mean ‘the anointed one.’⁹⁷

773. ‘His Word’ (*zijn Woort*) refers to the words of institution quoted in Matthew 26:26.

775. The ‘quivering fingers, dedicated to the sacrifice’ are those of the Priest administering the sacrament.

776-9. For emphasis, Vondel repeats the phrase ‘What use is Manna’ (*Wat baet het Man*) at the start of 776 and 778. In 776-7, Vondel is asking what the advantage of Manna was to the Jews who died before reaching the Promised Land. In 778-9, he recalls Exodus 16:20-21, where we learn that any Manna left until the following morning bred worms and became foul and melted when the sun grew hot (see also lines 274 and 277 above).

780. In contrast to the Manna, the bread of the Eucharist does not decay. Molkenboer quotes the lines from Aquinas’ *Lauda Sion, A sumente non concisus, non confractus, non divisus, integer accipitur* (By the partaker, it is not cut, not broken, not divided, it is received whole). He also refers to Thomas à Kempis’ *Imitatio Christi*, Book 4, Section 2. Although this is on the wonders of the sacrament, there is no phrase in it which is a precise analogue to Vondel’s line.

782. The decay (*’t rotten*) refers to that of the body of whoever partakes of the Eucharist and the point is that this body will not decay.

⁹⁵ Jac. Van Ginneken, ‘De Techniek van Vondels Vergelijkingen met een Kijkje op een Onbelichten Kant van Vondels Zinne-Leven’, in: *Vondelkroniek*, jg. 1, 1930, 6-17, at 7. See also van Helten, *op. cit.*, Syntaxis 112, para. 245, for other examples of cases where Vondel omits prepositions of comparison.

⁹⁶ See for example, Vondel’s poem *Verovering van Grol, door Frederick Henrick, Prince van Oranje*, (Conquest of Grol, by Frederik Hendrik, Prince of Orange) which begins *Ick sing den legertoght des Princen van Oranjen* (I sing of the campaign of the Prince of Orange), coincidentally a similar opening to that which we see in the present poem. See Vondel, *De Werken*, *op. cit.*, *Deel 3*, 128.

⁹⁷ The Dutch *’s Gezalfden* (in the genitive) is one of a number of masculine nouns which is declined as a weak noun that we find in Vondel’s work.

783. One might expect the adjective *onbederfzaam* (immortal) to end with an ‘e’ as the noun *zaet* (seed) is qualified by a demonstrative adjective (dit) ‘this’. However, van Helten points out that such an ending is lacking in Vondel when the noun is neuter, as is the case here, and when the adjective ends in an unstressed syllable, as here, or the following noun does not begin with a stressed syllable.⁹⁸ See also lines 649-50 above for the sense in which the bread of the Eucharist acts as an ‘immortal seed.’

784. The Eucharist, as an immortal seed, sustains the corpse, even though it dies a death on earth. There is a sense of paradox here, emphasized by the repetition of ‘the corpse’ (*het lijck*) in each half of the line. However, as Vondel goes on to make clear, although the body dies an earthly death, the immortal seed, as he sees it, ensures that it will be resurrected as a glorious body (787) on the day of judgment (cf. line 650 above and I Corinthians 15:50 ff.).

791. ‘No appearance’ (*geen verwe*) refers to the accidents (see 793) of the bread, which remain the same even after it has been consecrated, effecting transubstantiation.

793. Accident(s) (*toeval*) are the category of temporary qualities such as colour, smell, extension found in the philosophy of Aristotle, appropriated by Thomas Aquinas, in his defence of the doctrine of transubstantiation, over against substance, which is the permanent, essential quality of a thing.⁹⁹

793-5. The idea that the body of Christ is covered in the accidents of bread in order to ‘goad the heart with longing’ (794) is an interesting one. It is not clear though whether Vondel’s point in 795 is that it is the body of Christ which ‘was never trapped in gold or finery.’ If it is, then this seems strange, for one could argue that in some sense when the host is carried in a monstrance, the body of Christ is then indeed ‘trapped in gold or finery.’

796. Vondel repeats his assertion that reason alone is insufficient to fathom the Mysteries of the Altar. This concludes the speech of John the Evangelist.

The Poet takes on opponents (797-812)

Commentary

This section acts as an introduction to a much larger section (797-1174), in which Vondel first raises objections to the Mass by his opponents and then responds to these objections. As he reflects on the words of John the Evangelist which precede this section, Vondel tells us that he suddenly hears ‘a blast from behind of ghosts and ghouls rushing in’ (800-801). These are his opponents and it is clear that they represent the Calvinists whose own Eucharistic theology is the main object of Vondel’s scorn in this poem. He likens them to the

⁹⁸ Van Helten, *op. cit.*, Vormleer 97, para. 94.

⁹⁹ In his *Summa Theologiae* (III 76.3), Aquinas writes ‘Christ’s body is in this sacrament substantively, that is, in the way in which substance is under dimensions, but not after the manner of dimensions, which means, not in the way in which the dimensive quantity of a body is under the dimensive quantity of place.’ See also John E. Colwell, *Promise and Presence: An Exploration of Sacramental Theology* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2005), 167-172, and 176, n. 70. For a brief introduction to Aquinas’ application of Aristotelian philosophy in his Eucharistic theology, see Colwell, 7-8. David Brown notes, though, that in some quarters at least Aquinas’ use of Aristotelian metaphysics is felt to be inadequate. See David Brown, *God and Grace of Body* (Oxford, OUP, 2007), 411.

Harpies of classical Greek literature, half bird and half woman, who plundered the table of the blind King of Salmydessus, in Thrace, Phineus. However, their stomachs were thin and they could not hold the food they plundered (808-809).

Notes

797-8. Vondel gives a nice example of (pro)zeugma with the word ‘fed’ (*spijsde*).

801. Emphasis is achieved here by the repetition of the morpheme *spoock* in the Dutch. It is difficult to replicate this in English, but something of the effect has been attempted by the use of alliteration in the translation.

802. Unlike in 771 above, Vondel does use a preposition of comparison *als* (like) to effect a simile. Molkenboer lists other places where Vondel refers to Harpies. Virgil describes them in Aeneid III, 216-18 as *virginei volucrum vultus, foedissima¹⁰⁰ ventris // proluvies, uncaeque manus, et pallida semper // ora fame* (Birds of the face of a maiden, an overflow of excrement from their stomachs, and crooked hands, and with faces ever gaunt from hunger). Given this, the simile is well-chosen.

804. The analogy with what Vondel considers the Calvinists do to the Eucharistic table is clear.

811. Another example of how, looking back now, Vondel feels he has been led astray by other, i.e. non-Catholic, doctrines of the Eucharist.

And the spirit of the Non-Romans boasts with blasphemy (813-888)

Commentary

The Calvinists begin by asserting that the Roman Catholic Church has lied (813, 819) in its Eucharistic theology. They say that it has ridden roughshod over Scripture, the Church Fathers and Reason (822) in making the claims they do in their Eucharistic theology. They then say that if the Catholic account agrees with just one of these authorities, then they will admit defeat (823). In turn they argue how Scripture (831-850), the Church Fathers (851-860), and Reason (861-886) support their position rather than that of the Catholics. At the end of this section, St. John waves the Calvinist ghosts and ghouls away, and in the next section goes on to defend the Catholic position.

Notes

813. (Marginal comment) The ‘Non-Romans’ (*Onroomschen*) are principally the Calvinists. The Dutch word which I have translated as ‘lying spirit’ is a coinage that we also find in the work of another poet of the Dutch Golden Age, P. C. Hooft.¹⁰¹ The term, *lastergeest*, consists of *geest*, which means spirit, and *laster*. This often has the meaning of ‘slander’ or

¹⁰⁰ Molkenboer has a reading of *faedissima*, but *foedissima* seems more likely.

¹⁰¹ P. C. Hooft, *Nederlandsche Historien, Tweede Boek* (1642), eds. W. G. Hellinga and P. Tuynman (Amsterdam: AUP, 1972), 77.

‘libel,’ but by extension can mean ‘lying’ particular with the intention of defaming, hence the translation here ‘lying spirit.’

815 ‘He’ (*hy*) refers to the Pope.

817. According to Catholic Eucharistic theology, when the Priest raises the host and says the words of institution, ‘This is my body,’ the bread undergoes transubstantiation, becoming substantially the body of Christ.

818. ‘The mouth of Truth’ (*Waerheits mont*) refers to Christ, who referred to himself as the Truth in John 14:6. His mouth, which spoke the words of institution at the Last Supper, was closed the next day when he was crucified.

819. ‘O lying grave.’ The Dutch word translated here as ‘lying’, *laster*, is considered in the note to line 813 above. Molkenboer points to a similar phrase in the Psalms. However, his reference seems to be incorrect for he points to Psalm 4:11. This should be Psalm 5:11 in the Vulgate (*sepulchrum patens guttur eorum* (their throat is an open grave)), which is Psalm 5:9 in the NRSV.

821. ‘The Kingdom of hellish night’ (*het Rijck des helschen nachts*) is a typical piece of Calvinist invective against the Catholic Church. We find other examples of such invective in the poetry of Constantijn Huygens. In one poem, he calls the Catholic Mass ‘The whorish Mass’ (*De Hoere-Miss*).¹⁰²

The word that Vondel uses for ‘dare’ is *durf*. This equates to *durft* in modern Dutch, a form Vondel also uses.¹⁰³

822. ‘The Consecrated page’ (*t Gewijde blad*) refers to Scripture and ‘the Fathers’ (*de Vaders*) refers to the early Church Fathers. The argument of the Calvinists is that if one of these or Reason agree with Catholic Eucharistic theology, then they should submit to this, but they will now go on to argue that this is not the case. In his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, John Calvin sometimes uses a not dissimilar triad of authority in order to back up his assertions, though he replaces Reason with Augustine of Hippo. For example, in *Institutes* I, xi, 13, he uses each of these as an authority to support his assertion that images should be removed from churches.¹⁰⁴

823. The ‘it’ (*dit*) refers to the doctrine of Real Presence, which is underpinned by the doctrine of transubstantiation.¹⁰⁵ The subjunctive form of the verb, *toestemm*, might be unexpected in an open condition, but according to one commentator this was not unusual in the written Dutch of Vondel’s time.¹⁰⁶

825. ‘The Tiber’ (*den Tyber*) is an example of metonymy referring to Rome.

¹⁰² The manuscript reference for the poem is KA XL-c 1654, fol. 23v.

¹⁰³ Van Helten, *op. cit.*, Vormleer 36, para. 47.

¹⁰⁴ See, for example, John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles (London: SCM Press, 1961), (henceforth *Institutes*) I, xi, 13. See also Joby (2007), *op. cit.*, 23 ff.

¹⁰⁵ We should note in passing that contrary to what might be considered to be the case, John Calvin affirmed a doctrine of Real Presence, though the means by which he considered it to be achieved differs from the means as understood in the Catholic tradition. See John E. Colwell, *Promise and Presence: An Exploration of Sacramental Theology* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2005), 170-171.

¹⁰⁶ Van Helten, *op. cit.*, Syntaxis 41, para. 183.

826. ‘That body’ (*dat lichaem*) refers to Christ’s body. What we have here is Vondel’s own understanding of Calvinist Eucharistic theology placed in the mouths of the ‘ghouls and ghosts’ who are now speaking. However, this is by no means a comprehensive understanding of the theology, but is, rather, prone to descending into over-simplistic name-calling which in the other direction Calvinists such as Huygens are also guilty of.¹⁰⁷ Vondel begins by suggesting that for Calvinists there is no partaking of the body of Christ in the Eucharist. This is not so, but there is a critical difference in that for Calvinists, the partaking of Christ’s body occurs in heaven as a result of the *sursum corda*, rather than on earth, at the altar, in the transubstantiated Eucharistic bread, which is the case for Catholics. Again, in the second part of this line, Vondel repeats a common accusation hurled at Calvinists, i.e. that they believe that the bread of the Lord’s Supper is merely a sign (*teken*) pointing beyond itself to the reality of Christ’s risen and ascended body. Finally, although there is some evidence to support this accusation, other evidence suggests that for the Calvinists the Eucharist bread is something more than a ‘mere’ sign.

828. ‘On the Father’s throne’ echoes the Calvinist’s assertion that because Christ has ascended to heaven, he has to remain locally present there and cannot be locally present on the many altars at which the Mass is celebrated, as Catholics assert.

829-830. As in 825, ‘The Tiber’ (*den Tyber*) refers to Rome. The accusation from the Calvinists is that the (Roman) Catholic Church has replaced what they see as the truth, with the falsehood of the Mass, embodied by the host (its idol) (*zijn’ afgodt*).

831-834. The Calvinists begin their attempt to show that Rome differs from Scripture (see 822-824). They accuse the Catholics of misinterpreting the gospel of John, above all John 6, where, according to the Catholics, Christ promised the faithful his own flesh and blood (e.g. John 6:51, and 53-56). Further, Catholics make a link between these passages and the Last Supper (833-834), which is something the Calvinists deny. Molkenboer notes that this is a point that Bellarmine makes in his defence of the Mass (405D).

831. ‘The anointed head’ (*’t gezalfde hooft*) refers to Christ (see 772 above).

835. ‘It’ (*hy*) refers to the Tiber, mentioned in 829, which is a metonymy for Rome. The ‘letters’ (*lettren*) are the words of institution spoken by Christ at the Last Supper.

836. ‘Trumpet and sound’ (*trompet en klanck*) is hendiadys for ‘Trumpet sound.’

837. This is a common charge of the Calvinists; that the Catholics partook, or believed they partook, of the physical body of Christ as it had been on earth. In this poem, Vondel himself does not seem entirely clear whether this charge is justified or not. In one place, lines 1608-12, he writes,

...This soul medicine that removes all impurity.
Let him be cured who languishes mortally.
Man’s being consists of flesh and blood.
The High Priest serves up [Christ’s] Flesh, fully consecrated,
And feeds you with that stuff from which you are made.

¹⁰⁷ See note to line 821 above for one example.

In the next line, he reiterates this point, saying ‘like can sustain like.’ Elsewhere, though, he conceives of Christ’s Eucharistic body differently, as for example in lines 1383-1398 of Book I of this poem, where in quick succession he gives lists three different ways in which Christ’s Eucharistic body could be conceived.

838. Here, the Calvinists accuse the Catholics of committing the same error as the people of Capernaum in John 6:52, who interpreted Christ’s words literally and asked ‘How can this man give us his flesh to eat?’

840. The Calvinists now pick up on Christ’s words recorded in John 6:63, where he says that the flesh is useless, but the words he has spoken, to the people of Capernaum in the preceding verses, and to which they themselves have just alluded, give spirit and life.

841. ‘The Institutor of the Mysterious Work’ (*d’Insteller des Geheimwercks*) is Christ. Vondel uses the word *geheimwerck*, literally ‘mysterious or secret work,’ as a synonym for ‘sacrament,’ (also *sacrament* in Dutch). He never uses this word in the body of the poem, though he does use it in the marginal notes.¹⁰⁸ Molkenboer notes that Vondel uses a slightly different compound noun, *geheimerck* (mysterious or secret mark or sign), in the phrase *d’Insteller des Geheimercks* spoken by John the Evangelist in line 993, when he is responding to the Calvinist attacks on Catholic Eucharistic theology. This is true and it clearly mirrors the phrase Vondel places in the mouths of the Calvinists in the current line. But, the reason for this contrast is not clear, for one might expect the Calvinists to defend a term containing the phoneme *merck*, and the Catholics, through John, to defend one containing *werck*.

The point the Calvinists are making here is that they believe that when Christ spoke the words of institution, ‘This is my Body,’ he was speaking in a figurative manner. They contrast this with the Catholics, who, they believe, interpret these words literally.¹⁰⁹

844. See 826 above for comment on the Catholic accusation that for Calvinists, the elements of the Eucharist are mere signs.

846. ‘This maze’ (*dien doolhof*) refers to the errors that the Calvinists believe Rome has made in its Eucharistic theology.

847. Reference to an ‘that unfailing thread’ (*dien onfaelbren draet*), which will show the way out of the Roman maze, recalls the thread with which Ariadne helped Theseus to escape from the labyrinth in Knossos, Crete.

848. ‘Wisdom’ refers to Christ. Reference is made to ‘her counsel’ as Wisdom (*Wijshheit*) is feminine in Dutch.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁸ Cf. L. C. Michels, ‘Opmerkingen over Vondel’s Woordgebruik,’ in: *Vondeljaarboek 1949*, 20-27, at 23. Michels also reminds us that Vondel avoids the word *hostie* (host) in the poem as well.

¹⁰⁹ This very point is made by Constantijn Huygens in one of his poems on the Lord’s Supper (Joby (2008), *op. cit.*, Poem 10). He accuses the Catholics of taking the words of institution literally and argues that if they take these words literally, then they should take other pronouncements by Christ literally, so that when in the Gospel of John, Christ makes a series of ‘I am’ statements, they should consider that Christ really was a Way, a Door and a Vine (p. 73, l. 51). Huygens concludes by asking the Catholics whether they have ever heard of the language of Canaan, i.e. of the figurative use of language, which, according to Huygens, should lead them to believe that when Christ said, ‘This is my body’, he really means ‘This is *like* my body.’ See note 1010 below for a further discussion of this matter.

850. The ‘never-blemished books’ (*noit bekladde boecken*) refers to the bible.

851-855. In trying to support his arguments, John Calvin often referred to the practice of the early church as a model which he followed, cf. 822 above. Specifically, he looked to the first five centuries of the Christian Church as a time when practice was in some sense purer. For example, when trying to use the example of the early church in order to support the removal of images from churches, he writes, ‘we will recall that for about five hundred years, during which religion was still flourishing, and a purer doctrine thriving, Christian churches were commonly empty of images.’¹¹¹ Molkenboer suggests that Vondel is following Bellarmine here, who provides a similar quotation from Calvin asserting that practice in the church in the first five hundred years of its existence was somehow purer than that which followed.¹¹² The Emperor Augustus died in 14 AD.

Although Vondel does not use it as an argument in the poem, he could have referred to the writings of Cyril of Jerusalem from the middle of the fourth century AD, from which it is clear that the writer believed that the bread and wine of the Eucharist did in some sense turn into the body and blood of Christ.¹¹³

854. Vondel uses the word *gevaert*, translated here as ‘colossus’, elsewhere, as in the following lines which describe the monastery of San Lorenzo de El Escorial, outside Madrid:

*Daer rijst een groot gevaert en hemelhooge kerck,
De weereld door geroemt het achtste wonderwerck.*¹¹⁴

855. *In Libyen* (In Libya) is metonymy for ‘in Africa.’

856. ‘Latin and Greek’ refers to the early Church Fathers, who wrote in Latin and in Greek.

857. ‘This compass’ refers to the teaching that the Eucharistic elements are a sign. It is a well-chosen metaphor, for in some sense a compass is also a sign, pointing beyond itself to another reality, which is how Catholics viewed the Calvinist understanding of the Eucharistic elements, i.e. as signs pointing beyond themselves to the body and blood of Christ. This metaphor also allows Vondel to move onto the sailing metaphor with which he continues to line 859.

¹¹⁰ The Dutch word that Vondel uses here for ‘her’ is *heur*. For a discussion on the use of each in Vondel’s work, see van Helten, *op. cit.*, Vormleer 121, para. 114.

¹¹¹ Latin: *Meminerimus quingentis circiter annis, quibus magis adhuc florebat religio, et sincerior doctrina vigebat, Christiana templa fuisse communiter ab imaginibus vacua* (*Corpus Reformatorum XXX, Ioannis Calvinii opera quae supersunt omnia II*, 84).

¹¹² The quote from Bellarmine is: *Constat vetustos omnes scriptores, qui totis quinque saeculis post Apostolos vixerunt, uno ore nobis patrocinari*: ‘It is the case that all ancient writers, who lived during the five complete centuries after the Apostles, support us with one voice’. Bellarmine, *op. cit.*, 469-70.

¹¹³ ‘[Jesus Christ] by his own will once changed water into wine at Cana in Galilee. So why should we not believe that he can change wine into blood? ... We should therefore have full assurance that we are sharing in the body and blood of Christ. For in the type of bread, his body is given to you, and in the type of wine, his blood is given to you, so that by partaking of the body and blood of Christ you may become of one body and one blood with him.’ See Alister McGrath, *Christian Theology: An Introduction*, 3rd edition (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001), 522.

¹¹⁴ Translation: ‘Here a great monument and heaven-high church rises up, // praised throughout the world as the eighth wonder.’ See *Geboortklock van Willem van Nassau*, ll. 775-6, in: Vondel, *De Werken, Deel 2*, 553.

860. The sense of this is that however much Rome (the ‘wandering star’) may go astray, the Calvinists will follow a fixed star. However, given that it is the Calvinists in the plural who are speaking it is slightly surprising that Vondel uses the possessive adjective ‘my’ here.

861ff. The Calvinists now appeal to Reason to support their Eucharistic theology.

862. *Die* refers to Reason. I translate this as ‘who’ as it seems to me that Vondel is casting Reason here as an allegorical figure, cf. notes to lines 160 and 1051. Molkenboer glosses the Dutch *dit hol* as *deze duisternis*, which means ‘this darkness.’ However, *hol* can also mean ‘cave’ and I wonder here whether there may be an allusion to Plato’s cave in *The Republic*, Book VII.

866. Cf. Acts 9:18, where ‘something like scales fell from [Paul’s] eyes.’

868. *Zy* (she) refers to *de Reden* (Reason), which is feminine in Dutch. I retain the feminine pronoun as Reason seems to be an allegorical figure here, cf. note to 862 above.

869. The argument that Vondel is putting into the Calvinists’ mouths is that Reason supported by the evidence collected by the senses leads to the truth. However, earlier, in line 547, and in the introductory poem, *Op de Tittelprint van d’Altaer-Geheimenissen*, Vondel, affirming the Catholic position, argues that we should not rely on the evidence of the senses to come to an understanding of the truth concerning the Eucharist.

871-4. I would argue that Vondel himself relies on the very Reason that he now accuses the Calvinists of relying on in their defence of their own Eucharistic theology.

872. The Dutch *Des Godtsdienst* (Of religion) is unexpected. One might expect *Des Godtsdienst(e)s*, but sometimes the final *s* is subsumed by the preceding *st* or, elsewhere, *s/sch*.¹¹⁵ This being so, Molkenboer’s suggestion that this is an old genitive form does not suffice.

873. Put simply, the Calvinist argument here is that if something looks like bread, it is bread. For Vondel, of course, the consecrated bread of the Eucharist is substantially changed into the body of Christ. Vondel also takes the opportunity here to show what a brilliant word-smith he is. In this and the next eleven lines, Vondel uses rhymes which he repeats in lines 1093 ff. In the present lines, he discusses human reason, on which the Calvinists are deemed to rely, and in the second set of lines he discusses divine reason, which is of course superior, and which, he argues, underpins Catholic Eucharistic theology.¹¹⁶

875. For Calvinists, the risen, ascended body of Christ remains in heaven and so cannot be in any other place.¹¹⁷ For Vondel, they have arrived at this position using Reason alone.

878-9. ‘The madness’ (*De razerny*) is repeated at the start of consecutive lines for emphasis.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁵ Van Helten, *op. cit.*, Vormleer 55, para. 64.

¹¹⁶ Brom (1935), *op. cit.*, 249. See also Molkenboer (1907), *op. cit.*, II, 381-2.

¹¹⁷ Calvin, *Institutes*, *op. cit.*, 4, xvii, 18.

¹¹⁸ Molkenboer ((1907), IV, 130) notes that Vondel avoids the philosophical arguments in relation to the assertion that Christ’s Eucharistic body can be in many places when refuting his opponents’ position in order to avoid taking sides in a discussion in which there was more than one opinion amongst Catholic theologians.

878. According to Catholic Eucharistic theology, the glorified body of Christ is not limited by place and so can be both in heaven and under the form of numerous pieces of consecrated bread on many altars throughout the world.¹¹⁹

879-880. According to the Aristotelian ideas appropriated by Thomas Aquinas in his defence of the doctrine of transubstantiation, a thing consists of a permanent substance and a set of mutable accidents, such as colour, taste, smell etc. According to the Calvinist critics here, if the substance is removed, or changed, as the substance of bread is in transubstantiation, then the accidents (of bread) can no longer persist on their own. This is something that Vondel later refutes, saying that God has the power to support the accidents of bread, despite the absence of its substance (1225 ff).

880. Vondel inserts a svaribakhti vowel in the word *zellefstandigheit* (substance) (the second syllable) in order to maintain the metre.

882-3. The style of these lines is bombastic. *Stof* and *stanck* (Dust and decay) are hard, alliterative sounds; *Schepper* and *scheppen* (Creator and create) are also alliterative, giving four words starting with 's' in 882. In 883, there is polysyndeton, with all the words except one being monosyllabic, which gives an effect of something like a drumbeat.

882. 'Dust and decay' (*Stof en stanck*) refers to the Priest. Here, the idea is that in Catholic Eucharistic theology, merely by saying the words of institution, the Priest calls forth Christ, his own Creator. Vondel does not use the subjunctive forms of modal verbs, e.g. *kunne*. So, here he uses the form *kan* for the subjunctive.¹²⁰

884. 'Let's be quiet...' marks the end of the Calvinists' assault on Catholic Eucharistic doctrine. The verb *belgh*' is in a temporal clause and is one example of where Vondel uses the subjunctive in such a clause beginning with the conjunction *eer* (before).¹²¹

885. There is a confessional tone to this line from Vondel. Molkenboer suggests Vondel is recalling here how the questions raised by the Calvinists held the poet himself back from accepting Catholic Eucharistic theology for a long time.

886-8. The Calvinists disappear. Molkenboer makes a useful comparison with a passage from Canto IX of Dante's *Inferno*:

As frogs before their enemy
The snake all vanish through the water
Till each squats on the bottom,
So did I see more than a thousand destroyed souls
Flee before one who passed

¹¹⁹ In his *Summa Theologiae* (III 75.1), Aquinas writes 'Christ's body is not in this sacrament in the same way as a body is in a place, which by its dimensions is commensurate with the place, but in a special manner which is proper to this sacrament.' A little later (III 76.3), he writes in a similar vein, 'Christ's body is in this sacrament substantively, that is, in the way in which substance is under dimensions, but not after the manner of dimensions, which means, not in the way in which the dimensive quantity of a body is under the dimensive quantity of place.'

¹²⁰ Van Helten, op. cit., Syntaxis 47, para. 188,

¹²¹ *ibid.*, Syntaxis 37, para. 181.

Over the Styx with dry soles.
He was clearing that gross air,
Often moving his left hand in front of him.¹²²

St. John defends the Catholics (889-894)

Commentary

After the Calvinists disappear, John the Evangelist speaks again and, appropriating the language of the parable of the sower from the Gospel of Luke, and that of Paul in Ephesians 6, where Paul exhorts his addressees to put on the armour of God, he encourages Vondel to respond to ‘the volley of lies’ that the Calvinists have told in the preceding lines.

Notes

889. One might expect the form *De Heilighe* (The Saint) in the Dutch, but the form *De Heiligh* is an example of how some nominative (and accusative) masculine singular nouns in Vondel’s poetry do not take the final ‘e’. This is a result of the influence of the strong declension on adjectival nouns, such as this.¹²³

889-91. The Dutch words *schricken*, *picken* and *slicken* form a tail-rhyme, a form of rhyme, which occurs several times in Vondel’s poetry.

890-1. There is a clear allusion here to the parable of the sower in Luke 8:5ff. (Molkenboer has Luke 7:5, which is incorrect).

894. ‘The shield of Truth’ (*Waerheits schild*) appropriates the language of Ephesians 6, combining ‘the belt of truth’ and ‘the shield of faith.’

Simeon’s Prophecy (895-906)

Commentary

Here, Vondel recalls the prophecy of the devout old man, Simeon, who came into the temple at Jerusalem when Christ was being circumcised there, and recognized him as a ‘light for revelation to the Gentiles.’ In Luke 2:34, he says ‘This child is destined for the falling and the rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be opposed.’

Notes

897. ‘The Blessed child’ (*’t Gezegent kint*) refers to Christ. There is no final ‘e’ on *Gezegent*, as Vondel sometimes omits this when the stress is not on the final syllable. Here it is on the

¹²² Italian: *Come le rane innanzi alla nemica // biscia per l’acqua si dileguan tutte, // fin ch’alla terra ciascuna s’abbica, // vid’ io più di mille anime distrutte // fuggir così dinanzi ad un ch’al passo // passava Stige con le piante asciutte. // Dal volto rimovea quell’aere grasso, // menando la sinistra innanzi spesso.* Dante Alighieri, *Inferno*, Canto IX, ll. 76-83.

¹²³ Van Helten, *op. cit.*, Vormleer 111, para. 106. cf. line 1315 in which *de waenwijs* (the pedant) is similarly inflected.

middle syllable. We also see this a few lines later in line 901 with *'t zedigh oogh* (the demure gaze).¹²⁴

902. 'He' (Christ) refers back to 'the Blessed child,' *'t Gezegent kint*, of line 896. Vondel though uses the demonstrative pronoun *dees* to refer to the child, which at first sight seems strange, as 'child' (*kint*) is neuter in Dutch, so one might expect the neuter demonstrative pronoun *dit*. However, the fact it refers to Christ, a masculine being, probably overrides concerns about grammatical accuracy for Vondel.¹²⁵

904-5. The point that Vondel is making here, that Simeon's prophecy that Christ would be a 'sign of bitter opposition,' relates to the divisions in the Christian Church over Eucharistic doctrine. A similar point is made by Constantijn Huygens in what was probably his first poem on the Eucharist. He writes,

My soul is unsurprised, at what did centuries later
Become the strife-filled ground for discord without end.¹²⁶

...in part fulfilled in the opposition to the most worthy Sacrament (907-926)

Commentary

This section picks up on line 904, in which the prophecy of Simeon, that Christ would be the cause of 'bitter opposition,' is reported by Vondel. Here, he argues that this is despite the fact that the words of institution are 'as clear as the sunlit day' (908), they were faithfully recorded by John who was with Christ at the Last Supper (910-14) and, according to Vondel, the words have been faithfully preserved in the bible by the (Catholic) Church down the ages (915ff.)

Notes

907. *Geheimerck*, a word that Vondel places in the mouth of St. John, which I translate as 'secret mark', refers to the Holy Sacrament. This compares with the word *Geheimwerck* (secret work) which Vondel places in the mouths of the Calvinists in line 841 above. He never uses the Dutch word *sacrament* in the body of the text of the poem, though it does appear in the marginal note to this section.

908-10. Vondel's argument here is that there can be no mistaking the fact that because Christ said 'This is my Body, this is my Blood,' he meant that the bread that he blessed and wine he gave thanks for at the Last Supper really did substantially become his body and blood. He repeats the point in lines 927-30 below.

909. *Lasteren* refer here to lies which are directed against a person, in this case Christ.

910-11. 'God's lips' (*Godts lippen*) refer to those of Christ.

¹²⁴ *ibid.*, Vormleer 97, para. 94. Cf. line 783 above.

¹²⁵ See van Helten, *op. cit.*, Vormleer 125, para. 120 for Vondel's use of *dees/deze*.

¹²⁶ Dutch: *Mijn ziel vergaapt sich niet aen wat vele eewen later // De grove gronden leij van eewelick gekijf*. See Joby (2008), *op. cit.*, 38-39, Poem 1, ll. 5-6.

911-12. 'His disciple' (*zijn leerling*) refers to John who is speaking here. In John 13:23, he writes 'One of his disciples – the one whom Jesus loved – was reclining next to him.'

913-14. In his Gospel, John reports that Christ on a number of occasions asserted that he was the fulfillment of the Law and the Prophets (John 13:18,34; 15:25; 17:12) and also of his Father's will (John 6:38).

914. There is elision in the Dutch between the end of *breetste* and *heeft*. Molkenboer suggests that this is a remnant of Vondel's original South Brabant dialect.

917. Here, we have another example of polysyndeton, with a procession of monosyllabic words, giving the feeling of a drum beat.

919. Molkenboer glosses *Dees Huismoêr* as 'This Mother Church.' I translate it simply as 'this Mother' which is closer to the Dutch.

920. The verb *berghen* (to guard) has both strong and weak past participles in Vondel's poetry. Here, the weak form, *geberght*, is used.¹²⁷

921. Molkenboer goes to great lengths to rebut those who accuse Vondel of being anti-Semitic.¹²⁸ He makes a good case, although when one reads lines such as this, where the 'Jew' is yoked to the Heathen and Heretic, one cannot help but feel that he did not hold them, or perhaps their religion, in particularly high regard. Clearly, there is a sense in which if one believes the central claims of Christianity, then one is forced to reject aspects of the Jewish religion, but this juxtaposition does, at least to the modern eye, seem unfortunate.

923. 'Her' (*haer*) refers to the Mother Church in line 919.

924ff. Jac. Zeij suggests that Vondel may have had in mind a frontispiece, which appeared in many bibles during the seventeenth century, when writing these lines, in which he defends the place of Scripture in the Catholic Church. He notes that he found the frontispiece in a bible from 1645, the year in which Vondel published this poem, although it is likely that this part of the poem at least would have been written before 1645.¹²⁹

924-5. The Dove (*de Duif*) and the Tongue (of fire) of Pentecost (*Pinxtertong*) are both symbols of the Holy Spirit.

926. 'The inerrant writers' (*d'onfeilbre schrijvers*) are the four Gospel writers. Vondel's argument is that if they are inerrant, then all they write must be true, and literally so. However, literal truth is of course not the only type of truth. Calvinists, for example, would concur that Christ's words of institution are true, but true in a figurative manner, not a literal one. Such truth, they would argue, is no less true or valid than literal truth.¹³⁰

¹²⁷ Van Helten, *op. cit.*, Vormleer 30, para. 39d.

¹²⁸ B. H. Molkenboer, 'Was Vondel Antisemiet?' in: *Vondel-Kroniek*, jg. 10, 1939, 85-104.

¹²⁹ Zeij, *op. cit.*, 50 and Plate XII.

¹³⁰ See a poem by Constantijn Huygens, which addresses this very subject in: Joby (2008), *op. cit.*, Poem 10.

The Catholic Church speaks Christ's language (927-930)

Commentary

In this short section, Vondel repeats the point he makes a little earlier in lines 908-910, arguing that we must take the words of institution, spoken by Christ at the Last Supper, as the literal truth.

Notes

928. 'A thunder' (*een donder*) recalls lines 555-7 in which *donder* is repeated three times on consecutive lines.

929. *Letterstarren* (letter-stars) is another compound noun of Vondel's invention. These are bright and fixed, in contrast to the *dwaelstar* (wandering star (which strays)) of line 860.

...partakes of what is signified and no bread (931-942)

Commentary

Here, Vondel again asserts that it is the flesh and blood of Christ, of which the faithful partake in the Eucharist (932-4). He contrasts this with the Calvinist position, according to which, as Vondel would have us believe, those who partake of the Eucharistic elements only partake of 'signs' and 'empty mark[s]' (932-3). If this were the case, he goes on, then what, he asks, would have been the point of all the prefigurations of the Old Testament, for the 'signs' of the Calvinists are, he tells us, no better than what the Jews had.

Notes

931. Babel (*Babel*) is a term of abuse used by the Calvinists to refer to Rome,¹³¹ which Vondel now throws back at the Calvinists, using it no doubt to allude to Geneva.¹³² In this form, Molkenboer is probably right in suggesting that it is the confusion that arose when the people in Babel in Genesis 11 started speaking different languages, which Vondel is playing on here. The Calvinists also used another name for the same city, Babylon, as a term of abuse for Rome, and we find this term in a poem by Constantijn Huygens to his friend and Catholic convert, Tesselschade Visscher.¹³³ He asks 'How far [does] Lebanon stand[] away from Babylon,' where Lebanon is an allusion to the Reformed Church.¹³⁴

932-3. 'Signs' (*tekens*) and 'empty mark[s]' (*looze merck*) are typical words for the Eucharistic elements in Catholic polemics.

¹³¹ A good example of how the Calvinists used the term Babel to refer to Rome, in particular with reference to attacks on the Calvinist Mass, is given in: Dirk Coigneau, "'Tot Babels Schande' Een Refreinfestbundel in het Calvinistische Brussel (1581)," in: *Spiegel der Letteren* 43 (2001), 205-223.

¹³² Cf. Zeij, *op. cit.*, 50. See also Vondel's introduction (*Voorrede*) to *Grotius Testament* of 1645, where he picks up again on the Calvinist use of *Babel* to attack the Catholics. Vondel, *De Werken, op. cit., Deel 4*, 625, l. 25, and 627, l. 57.

¹³³ Joby (2008), *op. cit.*, 106-7, l. 30.

¹³⁴ F. L. Zwaan (*op. cit.*, 125, n. 30) notes that Lebanon was traditionally a symbol of purity, which is why it was appropriated by the Reformed Church, which saw itself as a church purified of the error of the Catholic Church.

934. The Lamb (*'t Lam*) refers to the Lamb of God, a name for Christ used by John the Baptist in John 1.

937-40. Here we see a rehearsal of one of Vondel's central arguments for the need to accept the Catholic understanding of the Eucharist; this is that if the elements of the Eucharist are signs, as the Catholics assert that Calvinists believe them to be, then we are no better off than the Jews, to whom God gave prefigurations of the reality, as Catholics see it, of the body of Christ in the transubstantiated bread of the Mass. Molkenboer notes that Bellarmine devotes much of his defence of Catholic Eucharistic theology to this argument.¹³⁵

938. *Wijst* (points) and *wijzers* (pointers) come from the same root and are an example of where Vondel uses repetition for emphasis. We see something similar in line 940 with *beelt* and *beeldespoock*.

939-40. Another example of polysyndeton, using the conjunction *en* (and) four times in two lines.

941. The Dutch for 'prefigurations' here is *schijn*, which has the sense of 'appearance,' over against the reality of Christ's flesh and blood in the consecrated elements of the Mass.

941-2. Each line starts with *wat baet* (what is the advantage/value), repeated for emphasis.

...worse than Paschal lamb and Manna, of which Geneva partakes (943-950)

Commentary

The marginal note for this section qualifies the bread at the end of the marginal note summarizing the previous section. The point that Vondel is making here that the bread, of which the Calvinists partake, is in fact worse than the Paschal lamb and Manna that the Jews of the Old Testament enjoyed. So, for Vondel, this is another reason why their account of the Eucharist has to be incorrect, and that of the Catholic Church correct.

Notes

943. 'Back to Zion!' (*Naer Sion toe*), i.e. back to the customs of the Jews.

944. The Manna and Paschal lamb that the Jews received were tastier than the (untransubstantiated) bread, of which the Calvinists believe they partake.

945. John wrote about these matters above all in the sixth chapter of his gospel, so Vondel has him tell the reader that he should know the truth of what he himself wrote, which of course for Vondel is based on a literal interpretation of the Christ's words, as in John 6:53.

946. As the marginal note makes clear, 'the city' (*de stadt*) is Geneva.

¹³⁵ Bellarmine, *op. cit.*, 399-400.

947. Vondel refers to Capernaum here, whose people in John 6 did not understand Christ's words (especially v. 52), which he and his fellow Catholics would have seen as directly referring to the Last Supper. He is also making the link between Capernaum and Geneva we saw earlier in line 535.

948. Cf. Matthew 11:23 'And you, Capernaum, will you be exalted to heaven? No, you will be brought down to Hades.'

949. The verb *overkome* (befall) is in the subjunctive after *men wensch*' (let us hope). Vondel often uses the subjunctive after *wenschen* (to wish/hope).¹³⁶

949-950. 'The cursing city' (*de vloeckster*) refers to Geneva in particular and the Calvinists in general.

Christ did not dissimulate; he promised the Jews something better than Moses (951-972)

Commentary

In John 6:32-35, Christ tells the people of Capernaum that he is the bread of life and that what the Father has to give them (now) is better than the Manna their Jewish ancestors received in the wilderness. He goes on to attack the Calvinist position, according to which, he tells us, the bread that Christ gives us in the Eucharist is a mere sign (964). If that were the case, he continues, then Christians would be no better off than the Jews. In fact they would be worse off, for at least the Manna supported them in the wilderness (956). No, he concludes, the only way of considering the matter is to see the Manna as a prefiguration of something greater, i.e. Christ's own self-offering in the celebration of the Mass (971-2).

Notes

951. This refers to Christ.

952. This promise by Christ is recorded in John 6:32;49;50;58.

953. The barley (*gerst*) refers to the Feeding of the 5,000 (John 6:9).

953-6. Vondel repeats the argument that if the Calvinists are right and all that the communicants are given at the celebration of the Eucharist is bread, then this would not be an improvement on the Manna given to the Jews. In fact, it would be a step backwards, for at least the Manna supported them in time of famine in the wilderness. Compare lines 940-44.

957. The paradox that it was Christ, the Provider (*spijzer*), who gave the Jews the Manna, which also acted as a prefiguration of himself.

959-60. These lines recall John 6:30-31.¹³⁷

¹³⁶ Van Helten, *op. cit.*, Syntaxis 45, para. 187.

¹³⁷ Molkenboer notes that lines 959-63 closely match a passage from Bellarmine (*op. cit.*, 410B). He says *At certe simplex panis significationem corporis Christi non praestat panibus illis miraculo creatis, & multo minus ipsi Mannae, quod etiam Christum significabat... Praeterea illi signum petebant...obiicientes illi Manna, quod non sine magno miraculo pluebat Patribus in deserto; Christus autem respondet se daturum panem de caelo*

962. ‘God’s mouth’ (*Godts mont*) is Christ.

963. Compare John 6:32-35.

964. *Tekenkruim* (sign-crumb) is one of Vondel’s many coinages in this poem.

965. Here, Vondel may be drawing on a phrase which Bellarmine uses on several occasions to describe the Calvinist understanding of the partaking of the bread of the Eucharist: *manducatio Christi per fidem* (the eating of Christ through faith). This seems to suggest that for Calvinists, Christ is in no sense eaten, rather it is as if for Calvinists there is merely a spiritual ‘eating’ or ‘partaking’ of Christ, as opposed to Catholics, who, one might infer, do in fact eat Christ in the celebration of the Mass. However, if one looks closely at what John Calvin writes in his Institutes,¹³⁸ matters are not so clear cut. He uses the phrase *credendo manducari* (in believing we eat), i.e. faith is a necessary prerequisite of eating, not ‘when we eat, we only eat in a spiritual way.’

966. ‘If that were so...’ (*zoo*) i.e. if it were the case that the bread of the Eucharist were ‘only chewed with hope and steadfast trust,’ the position that Vondel ascribes to the Calvinists in lines 964-5. Vondel uses the form *kost* here for ‘could,’ though uses *kon* elsewhere.¹³⁹

967. Compare John 6:32.¹⁴⁰

968. The argument here is that if, in partaking of Christ’s body, the bread we eat is only a prefiguration, or symbol of Christ’s body, Christians are on a par with the Jews (Moses), for they had been doing that for a long time as the Manna was a symbol, too.¹⁴¹

970. The Dutch phrase translated here as ‘symbolic food’ is *geschildert eten*.¹⁴² This literally means ‘painted food’ and reminds us that Vondel uses the language of painting elsewhere to make a contrast between the reality of the Eucharist and an imitation/copy/painting of it. See for example line 91, where he talks of ‘The primed canvas of that Melchizedek,’ and lines 475ff., where Vondel contrasts a painting of a bride with the bride herself.¹⁴³

971-2. It is not clear where Vondel gets the image of turning to marble from, but his point here is that it does not make sense to have a prefiguration without a fulfilment of it, which, as he sees it, is what the Calvinists assert.

verum ‘Of course, normal bread, even if it signifies the body of Christ, is not greater than those loaves of bread, that were created by a miracle, and it is much less than the Manna, that also pointed to Christ... They (the people of Capernaum) demanded a sign, and they held up to Him the Manna, that rained down miraculously for the fathers in the desert, and Christ replied that He would give them the true bread of heaven.’

¹³⁸ *Institutes, op. cit.*, IV, xvii, 5.

¹³⁹ Van Helten, *op. cit.*, Vormleer 36, para. 47.

¹⁴⁰ Van Helten seems to expect the form *zelfs* or *selfs* here, but neither the text I am following, or Molkenboer or Zeij has *zelfs*. Van Helten, *op. cit.*, Vormleer 128, para. 123.

¹⁴¹ Molkenboer points to Bellarmine, *op. cit.*, 407D.

¹⁴² Incidentally, this is also the title of a series of reflections on this poem by Frans Kellendonk (see note to l. 17 above).

¹⁴³ The art of painting is intrinsic to the Baroque project, so we discuss how Vondel engages with it in this poem in the Introduction.

...and sought not to mislead them (973-984)

Commentary

In this short section, Vondel begins by making the point that Christ did not mislead the people of Capernaum when making statements such as ‘I am the bread of life,’ which John records in the sixth chapter of his Gospel (976). He then takes the people of Capernaum, and by proxy those of Geneva, to task for not understanding Christ’s words reported by John.

Notes

973. ‘The master’ (*De meester*) is Christ.¹⁴⁴

976. ‘My letters’ (*mijne boeckstaef*) i.e. my (John’s) record of Christ’s words in his Gospel.

977. ‘That school’ (*die school*) refers to the disciples who say in John 6:60, ‘This teaching is difficult; who can accept it?’ Molkenboer is wrong to say that these disciples are from Capernaum, for they at least include Christ’s core disciples.

980. A reference to John 6:63, where Christ says ‘it is the spirit that gives life; the flesh is useless.’

981. ‘The doubter’s position’ is that of the skeptical people of Capernaum in John 6.¹⁴⁵

984. ‘Him’ (*Hem*) refers to ‘the doubter’ of line 981.

981-4. In John 6:62, Christ says to his disciples, ‘Then what if you were to see the Son of Man ascending to where he was before?’ The point Christ seems to be making is that if they are struggling to understand his teaching about being the bread of life (v. 33), and his claim that those who eat his flesh and drink his blood will have eternal life (v. 54) then they will struggle even more with grasping the fact of his ascension to heaven. Vondel is making a similar point in lines 981-3, i.e. that Christ’s ascension is so miraculous that it would merely confirm the doubt of those who reject his teaching in vv. 33 and 54. He also goes further in lines 983-4, by arguing that if Christ is in heaven, it will be even harder for him to feed those he leaves on earth than it would be if he remained on earth.¹⁴⁶

The Non-Romans are like the people of Capernaum (985-992)

Commentary

In this short section, Vondel compares non-Catholics, in particular Calvinists, to the people of Capernaum, who, in John 6:52, showed how they did not understand Jesus’ words by asking ‘How can this man give us his flesh to eat?’ He goes onto reject what he sees as the empty

¹⁴⁴ Molkenboer points to the argumentation of Bellarmine (*op. cit.*, 410D).

¹⁴⁵ Van Helten, *op. cit.*, Vormleer 109, para. 105 notes that the form of the Dutch word *den twijflende* (the doubter) is an example of how the nominal declension influenced the declension of adjectival nouns in Vondel’s poetry. However, van Helten is wrong to say that this word is in the accusative case, as it is in the dative case. Molkenboer supports this view in his note on the line.

¹⁴⁶ Molkenboer points to Bellarmine, *op. cit.*, 411A as the source of Vondel’s argument here.

sign-feasts (989) of the Calvinists and implores the reader to accept Catholic Eucharistic doctrine (991-2).

Notes

985. ‘They’ (*Zy*) refers to the ‘Non-Romans’, particularly the Calvinists who, as Vondel sees it, like the people of Capernaum, reject Christ’s words.

988. It is not entirely clear what point Vondel is making here, but it seems to be that he is responding to the question of the Jews in John 6:52, ‘How can this man (Christ) give us his flesh to eat?’ a question which he also ascribes to the Calvinists. Vondel’s answer is that what Christ gives in the Eucharist is ‘living food’ (cf. John 6:51), but in a ‘spiritual way’ (*geestelijcker wijs*), rather than in the physical/‘fleshy’ manner his opponents accuse him of. However, if this is the correct reading, then he seems to come close to the language of John Calvin in Institutes IV, xvii, 33, where he says ‘For us the manner [of partaking of Christ] is spiritual because the secret power of the Spirit is the bond of our union with Christ.’ It would also seem to be the case that Vondel is being inconsistent, for later in Book I of this poem, in lines 1610-12, he seems to suggest that what communicants partake of in the Eucharist is of a similar order to the communicants themselves:

Man’s being consists of flesh and blood.
The High Priest serves up [Christ’s] Flesh, fully consecrated,
And feeds you with that stuff from which you are made.¹⁴⁷

989-90. ‘Empty sign-feasts’ (*lege schilderdisen*) and ‘body-likenesses’ (*lijfgelijckenissen*) are two examples of Catholic polemic based on their understanding of Calvinist Eucharistic theology. The latter is one of Vondel’s many coinages in this poem, the former is not listed in the *Woordenboek der Nederlandsche Taal*.

Covenants, Laws and Testaments are instituted clearly and not ambiguously (993-1015)

Commentary

As the marginal note makes clear, the point that Vondel aims to make in this section is that legal documents are never couched in ambiguous language. He suggests that the covenant that Christ made at the Last Supper (995-6) is of an order similar to that of a legal document and so it is couched in clear, unambiguous terms. Thus, when Christ said ‘This is my body,’ there can, according to Vondel, be no doubt that this is what he meant. He goes on to point out that when the Old Testament prophets spoke in a figurative manner, they made this clear (998-1002). In lines 1010-1012, Vondel’s argument gets somewhat complicated, and, as I argue below, it is flawed, but his point here is that just as the Jewish writers of the Old Testament made clear in the Hebrew when two things which were juxtaposed were in a figurative relationship, so Christ would have made it clear when he spoke in Aramaic, that if he had wanted the bread of the Last Supper to be understood as being merely in a figurative relationship with his body, which Vondel argues he did not, then he would have made this clear. This of course challenges the Calvinist interpretation of the words of institution and asks the reader to recognize that when Christ said ‘This is my body,’ he meant it literally.

¹⁴⁷ See also lines 837-8 above.

Notes

992. The ‘Secret Mark’ (*Geheimerck*) is the Sacrament. ‘The Institutor of the Secret Mark’ (*d’Insteller des Geheimercks*) is Christ. See 907 above for Vondel’s use of *Geheimerck* for ‘sacrament.’ Jac. Zeij has *Geheimwerk* in his text.

994. ‘At night’: the Last Supper took place at night (John 13:2).

996. ‘Final will’ (*jongsten Wil*) refers to the testament or covenant that Christ made with his followers at the Last Supper: ‘This is my blood of the new covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.’ (Matthew 26:28).

1000-1. Vondel repeats the phrase *Daer hy niet melt* (That he does not announce) at the start of each line for emphasis. Vondel’s point here is to ask, rhetorically, where a Prophet in the Old Testament does not make clear that he is speaking figuratively.

1010. ‘The Jew’ (*Hebreeu*) refers to the Jewish writers of the Old Testament. After the final word of the line, there is an asterisk. This tells us that Vondel’s coinage, *Veelstrijdigheden*, which I translate as ‘two opposing things,’ points to the Latin term, *Disparata*. Jac. Zeij discusses this at length and suggests that Vondel includes this note because he was concerned lest his readers, whom Zeij takes to be primarily theologians versed in philosophy, do not realize that he is referring to the philosophical term *Disparata* with his Dutch coinage.¹⁴⁸ He goes on to explain that *Disparata* are words that can never be joined to each other in a literal sense, but only in a figurative one, with the appropriate form of the verb ‘to be.’ He then asserts that words that do not usually belong together (he gives the example of ‘cow’ and ‘umbrella’) are never joined together in Hebrew with the copula ‘is,’ unless it is clear from the context that a figurative sense is intended. He concludes by saying that there is nothing in Christ’s use of the Hebrew, or to be more precise, Aramaic, as this is the language that Christ spoke, to indicate that anything other than a literal meaning was intended with the words of institution, ‘This is my body.’¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁸ For a discussion of Vondel as a theologian, see Molkenboer, ‘Vondel als Theoloog,’ in: *Jaarboek der RK Universiteit te Nijmegen 1937-8*, 106-112. Molkenboer includes a discussion here of Vondel’s development of his *prototypiek*, or view that the Old Testament contains precursors of the New Testament, one of the key features of Book I of this poem. See also Molkenboer (1907), I, 301 ff., and IV, 132-3, for a range of other views.

¹⁴⁹ Zeij, *op. cit.*, 53. Zeij also suggests that it could be that one of Vondel’s Catholic acquaintances, such as the Amsterdam Pastor Leonard Marius, may have suggested that *Veelstrijdigheden* was not such a good gloss of the Latin term *Disparata*. Zeij himself asks whether the gloss *Tegenstrijdigheden* (antitheses) might not have been a better choice. See also Molkenboer (1907), *op. cit.*, II, 385-6. Here, Molkenboer quotes Bellarmine’s argument concerning *Disparata*. Bellarmine’s basic point is that when the opponents of Catholic Eucharistic theology attack a literal interpretation of the words of institution, they often do so by arguing that we should not take these words literally in the same way that we should not take Christ’s words ‘I am the true vine,’ ‘I am the way...’ etc. in John’s Gospel literally (cf. Huygens’ Poem 10 in Joby (2008), *op. cit.* and line 841 above). However, Bellarmine responds to this by saying that such opponents never give an example using the pronoun *hoc*, which of course begins the words of institution in Latin. For him, ‘I’ and the predicates Christ uses such as ‘vine’ and ‘way’ are *Disparata*, totally other, and so they cannot be taken to be of the same order (or to put it another way, they can only be taken to be of the same order if their author makes clear that they should be). However, this is not the case for statements which begin *hoc est* and so for Bellarmine and thus for Vondel (esp. 1010), it is perfectly reasonable to see the *hoc* and *corpus meum* as being of the same order and thus to take the phrase literally. Bellarmine: *peccat argumentum adversariorum, quia nullum exemplum simile attulerunt. Nam in exemplis allatis semper praedicatur de disparato disparatum etc. Deberent igitur adferre exemplum, ubi de pronomine hoc praedicetur aliquid tropice.*

However, there are problems with this line of argument, put forward by Vondel, and faithfully explained by Zeij. The principal problem is that we do not in fact know what precisely Christ said in Aramaic, which was subsequently reported as *touto estin to soma mou* in the Greek New Testament and *hoc est corpus meum* in the Latin Vulgate. Another problem is that although Aramaic does have a particle (*ithay*), which may take the place of a copula, its use is limited and it may well be that Christ did not use a copula in pronouncing the words of institution in Aramaic.¹⁵⁰ There is also the question of whether Christ said the words subsequently taken as the words of institution, but this is not quite so germane to our discussion as the other problems discussed here.¹⁵¹

1011-12. Vondel uses the subjunctive here after the conjunction *'t en zy* (unless), though sometimes he does use the indicative after it.¹⁵²

1012-13. The argument here is that if the Jewish writers of the Old Testament had not indicated that two opposing things were only connected in a figurative sense (1010-12), as Vondel asserts, then the blood of the Old Covenant would not have sealed the covenant between God and the Jews (see Exodus 24:8).

1014. 'The book of salvation' (*'t heilboeck*) refers to the bible.

1015. Babylon (*Babilon*) refers to the confusion of Babel, another name for the same city, in Genesis 11. See line 931 above. It may also be an attempt by Vondel to throw back a Calvinist term of abuse for Rome and the Catholic Church to the Calvinists.

The Non-Romans must not teach St. Jerome Hebrew (1016-20)

Commentary

In this short section, which is a response to the assertions of the Calvinists in lines 841-5 above, Vondel argues that we should not question St. Jerome's Vulgate,¹⁵³ which included a translation of the Hebrew bible into Latin. This is both because of Jerome's knowledge of Hebrew (1016-17), and because he lived nearer in time to Christ and his Apostles than Vondel and his contemporaries. So, the argument goes, he would have understood the language of Christ better than them.¹⁵⁴

¹⁵⁰ Franz Rosenthal, *A Grammar of Biblical Aramaic* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1961), 41, discusses the use of this particle as a copula, the transcription is vocalized using Massoretic points. Arnold Meyer (*Jesu Muttersprache. Das galiläische Aramäisch in seiner Bedeutung für die Erklärung der Reden Jesu und der Evangelien überhaupt* (Leipzig: J.C.B. Mohr, 1896), 90) suggests that the Aramaic pronoun *hu'* would have been used and notes that this does not encapsulate a copula. He thus makes the point that I make, namely that undue emphasis has been placed on the word 'is' as against the word 'body' in discussions on the words of institution. See also A. Dammron, *Grammaire de L'Araméen Biblique* (Strasbourg: P. H. Heitz, 1961), 111.

¹⁵¹ For a discussion of the historicity of the words of institution, see Rudolf Pesch, *Das Abendmahl und Jesu Todesverständnis, Quaestiones Disputatae 80* (Freiburg: Herder, 1978).

¹⁵² Van Helten, *op. cit.*, Syntaxis 41-42, para. 183.

¹⁵³ For a good introduction to the history of the Vulgate and a detailed account of the place of the work of Jerome in the Vulgate to which Vondel would most likely have had access, see Pierre-Maurice Bogaert, 'Versions, Ancient (Latin),' in: *The Anchor Bible Dictionary, Volume 6 Si-Z, Sections B and C*, 800-802.

¹⁵⁴ For a short introduction to textual inaccuracies in the Vulgate, see McGrath, *op. cit.*, 52 ff. See also Bogaert, *op. cit.*, for a general overview of the shortcomings of Jerome's translation.

Notes

1016. Molkenboer gives a gloss of *leerling* (disciple) for *leerkint*. I disagree and think that Vondel is using the term rather dismissively, so ‘apprentice’ or even ‘novice’ is more appropriate. Jerome died in 420 AD, not 320 as Molkenboer states.

1018. ‘The time of salvation’ (*heileeuw*) refers to the time of Christ and his Apostles.

1019. St. Jerome is often depicted as being very thin, as a result of doing penance, in his cave in Bethlehem, in fine art. See for example the depictions of him by his namesake Hieronymus (Jerome) Bosch.¹⁵⁵

1020. i.e. Jerome lived closer in time to the Apostles than Vondel and his contemporaries.

Those who misinterpret the Holy Scripture, also perforce misinterpret the Church Fathers, ostensibly to prepare the old ship for sea. (1021-1032)

Commentary

Vondel continues his response to the attacks of the Calvinists in lines 800ff. In this section, he specifically refutes their claim that their Eucharistic theology is in line with that of the early Church Fathers (851-860 above), a claim they make in order to make it seem that their position accords with that of the early church (the old ship). Although the sea-faring metaphor he employs is a wonderful image, at this point he does not use any persuasive argument in order to convince the reader of the truth of his claim that his opponents misinterpreted these writers (1022). Rather, he relies on the power of the imagery.

Notes

1021. ‘The reckless mind’ (*’t Vermeten brein*) is that of Vondel’s opponents, in particular the Calvinists. *Bladers* is an older form of the plural of *blad* (page) which is no longer used in standard modern Dutch.

1022. ‘The first Fathers’ (*d’eerste Vaders*) are the early Church Fathers.

1023. Here, Vondel is responding to the Calvinists in lines 851-855.¹⁵⁶

1026. This recalls the swamp into which the Calvinists disappeared in line 888.

1027. The ‘fixed star’ (*vaste star*) picks up on the ‘wandering star’ (*dwaelstar*) of line 860.

1028. The Dutch form *dar* (dares) from *darren* is found in several places in Vondel instead of the more regular *dorren*. He also uses the verb *dorven*, in the same sense of ‘to dare’.¹⁵⁷

1028-32. Vondel uses an analogy from sea-faring, mirroring that he ascribes to the Calvinists in lines 857-9 to argue that although they think they follow in the wake of the early Church

¹⁵⁵ A good example is the c.1505 panel of St. Jerome in Prayer in the Museum voor Schone Kunsten, Ghent.

¹⁵⁶ Molkenboer draws a comparison with Bellarmine, *op. cit.*, 470.

¹⁵⁷ Van Helten, *op. cit.*, Vormleer 35, para. 47.

Fathers (the ancients (1029)), they do not. Jac. Zeij notes that Bellarmine, on whom Vondel so often draws in this poem, writes fifty pages of evidence from writers from the first up to and including the twelfth centuries, whose position on Eucharistic theology chimes with that of the Catholic Church, rather than that of the Calvinists and other non-Catholics.¹⁵⁸

Harmony of Catholic doctrine in this chapter (1033-1056)

Commentary

This section begins with a wonderful image of the Catholic Church as an organ. Just as the organ draws in one draught of air and pushes it through many pipes at different pitches, which produce harmonious music, so in the Catholic Church, the Holy Spirit inspires many voices to speak, but they all speak as one on theological matters, Vondel tells us (1033-6). However, it is not long before he is again on the attack against the Calvinists, and after saying that the Church Fathers would not have spoken so highly of the Eucharist if the Calvinists were right (1040-42), he goes on to accuse them of deceit, and of taking the words of the Church Fathers out of context (1046-50), and then of rejecting the Church Fathers in favour of Scripture, when the arguments of the former do not agree with their own position (1051-53). He concludes by accusing them of sophistry and of turning the words of their source texts this way and that to fit their own arguments (1054-6).

Notes

1037-40. Jac. Zeij points to an engraving by Anton Wierix of The Disputation on the Holy Sacrament (1609) by Peter Paul Rubens, which hangs in the Sint-Pauluskerk in Antwerp. This was produced in 1643, by which time, according to Molkenboer, Vondel was already busy with this poem. Although he does not state it explicitly, it seems that Zeij thinks Vondel may well have seen the engraving and that it may have inspired these particular lines.

1041-2. Vondel's argument here is that if the Calvinists were right, and it is only bread that is offered in the Eucharist, then the early Church Fathers would not have written so extensively and, in his eyes, effusively, about the Eucharist.

1043. The morpheme *beelt/beeld* (image) occurs three times in this line, for emphasis. Molkenboer points to a similar repetition in Dante, *Inferno V, 103: Amor, ch'a nullo amato amar perdona* (Love, which absolves no-one beloved from loving).¹⁵⁹

1045. Cf. line 856.

1046-7. Vondel's point here is that the Calvinists take passages out of their context in order to support their arguments concerning the Eucharist, something Bellarmine also accuses them in various places.

1051. 'Delusion' (*Waen*) is one of a number of abstract nouns in this poem, which Vondel seems to cast as an allegorical figure.¹⁶⁰ Here, the figure stands for the Calvinists, whom Vondel deems to be deluded about the correctness of their Eucharistic theology.

¹⁵⁸ Zeij, *op. cit.*, 55.

¹⁵⁹ See also *Altaergeheimenissen*, II, 122 and III, 1615.

1051-3. Vondel argues that when the Church Fathers disagree with the Calvinists, they reject the Church Fathers and seek support for their position in the New Testament.

1055. 'She' (*zy*) refers to 'Delusion' (*Waen*) in 1051. This is perhaps surprising as, according to the *Woordenboek der Nederlandsche Taal*, *waen* (*waan*) is masculine in gender. However, it seems that here, as elsewhere, as I note in 1051 above, Vondel casts 'Delusion' as a female allegorical figure here, hence his use of the female pronoun.

The Non-Romans arm themselves with deluded reason (1057-1066)

Commentary

The picture that Vondel creates here is of the Calvinists as a (female) giant, Delusion, who arms herself in order to make herself appear as Reason in order to assail the Catholic Church, in the person of Pope Urban VIII (1062) and his cardinals (1061). But, says Vondel, its action is in vain, for the giant will be defeated by God's Reason.¹⁶¹

Notes

1057-9. Molkenboer suggests that the image of the giant, Goliath, to whom Vondel will liken Calvin a little later in line 1151, is already in the poet's mind, and it is him whom we should think of as Vondel describes Delusion putting on the armour of Reason. However, there is no clear evidence to support this.¹⁶² Zeij may be nearer the mark when he talks of Delusion as an unspecified armoured giant, although as I note above in line 1055, Vondel does seem to cast Delusion as female.¹⁶³

1058-59. 'The iron armour' (of the use of reason) is derived from a hendiadys in the Dutch: *'t yzer* (iron) and *'t harrenas* (armour).

1060. 'From afar' (*van veer*) and 'the seven hills' (*de zeven toppen*) point to Rome, a long way from Vondel in the United Provinces and built on seven hills.

1061-5. Molkenboer is probably right to say that Vondel is being ironic in these lines.

1061-2. Castel Sant'Angelo in Rome was fortified by Pope Urban VIII. In Dutch, it is referred to as Angel Fort (*Engleburgh*). The 'red tops' (*roode koppen*) refers to the cardinals who wore red hats, *galeri*, in Vondel's time. In line 1062, he asks Urban, rhetorically what his plan is (*Wat raet, URBAEN?*) to deal with the threat posed by the Calvinists.

¹⁶⁰ Anna Bijns used *Waen* in a similar manner in 1528: *Tes ons scult, heeft ons de viant bedrogen; Waen heeft ons gelogen en ons selfs behagen*. (To our shame, the enemy has deceived us; Delusion has lied to us and even pleased us).

¹⁶¹ Van Can sees this as the start of a section that lasts for nearly 400 lines (1057-1441), in which Vondel attempts to reject the charge of his opponents that the doctrine of transubstantiation is irrational. Van Can, *op. cit.*, 37.

¹⁶² That said, Molkenboer does draw an interesting parallel between line 1059 and Goliath's utterance 'Am I a dog...?' (I Samuel 17:43).

¹⁶³ Zeij, *op. cit.*, 56.

1063. *Stormgevaert* refers to *Waen* (Delusion) in line 1057. Elsewhere, Vondel uses this compound noun in *Lucifer*, line 639: *wat tuigh, wat stormgevaert // Kan tegens hem bestaen* (what machine, what siege machine // Can stand against him) and line 1855: *met al hun slingertuigh, geschut, en stormgevaerte* (with all their slings, arrows and siege machines). Molkenboer suggests that this picks up on *'t gevaert der Kercke* in line 854, although there *gevaert* has a more positive connotation than it does here.

1064. The keys (to heaven) are traditional symbols of the Popes, reinforcing their claim to derive their authority from St. Peter, and thus ultimately to Christ.

...that cannot match God's reason (1068-1075)

Commentary

The marginal note provides an excellent summary of the content of this short section: human reason, which Vondel accuses his opponents of relying on in their Eucharistic theology, is no match for divine reason.

Notes

1068-69. This refers to oath that Christ swore at the start of several of his pronouncements in John 6: e.g. vv. 47 and 53: 'Very truly, I tell you.'

1071. Molkenboer notes that Bellarmine speaks of *Judaei et Pagani*.¹⁶⁴ *Turk* (*Turck*) is Vondel's own addition and may refer to Muslims as a whole. The Turkish, i.e. Ottoman, Empire controlled most of South-East Europe at this time, and it was in 1683, less than forty years after this poem was published, that they besieged Vienna for a second time.

1072. The 'cornerstone' (*hoecksteen*) refers to Christ (Ephesians 2:20), and Paul speaks of him as a 'stumbling-block' to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles in I Corinthians 1:23.

1073. The unreliability of the senses is a subject Vondel raises at several points in the poem, e.g. in *Op de Tittelprint van d' Altaer-Geheimenissen*, lines 4-5, and lines 762 and 862.

...nor his omnipotence (1076-1082)

Commentary

God's omnipotence also exceeds human reason.

Notes

1076. 'Her Father's' (*haer Vaders*) refers to Nature's Father, i.e. God as Creator.

1079. Another reference to the limited nature of the senses, repeated in 1081. See 1073 above. We see here another example of polysyndeton.

¹⁶⁴ Bellarmine, *op. cit.*, 603A.

Christ's incarnation is a miracle one hundred thousand times greater than this (1083-1091)

Commentary

Vondel's argument here is that if we believe in the incarnation, then we should believe that the substance of the bread and wine in the Eucharist does truly change into that of the flesh and blood of Christ on the consecration of the elements, as this is much easier to assent to than Christ's incarnation.

Notes

1085. Cf. article 30 of the Athanasian Creed, which states that Christ is fully God and fully human, a point made again in 1087: 'a double nature' (*een dubbele natuur*).

1086. Cf. Isaiah 9:6.

1087. In Matthew 1, Joseph, the husband of Mary, has King David amongst his forefathers.

1089. Cf. Wisdom of Solomon 15:10-11 for 'ensouled clay' (*gezielde klay*). Molkenboer draws a comparison between Vondel's notion of Christ being '(intimately) bound to eternal fire' (*verknocht met eeuwich vuur*), and the description of the Son of Man having 'eyes [] like a flame of fire' in Revelation 1:14.

1089. One might expect a final *-e* after *Heidensch* (Heathen), but here as elsewhere in Vondel's work, this is lacking.¹⁶⁵

God's reason does not yield before any opposition and confirms the fundamental Roman doctrine. (1091-1104)

Commentary

Having already asserted that God's reason is far superior to human reason, Vondel makes the claim that God's reason is at the heart of Catholic Eucharistic doctrine.

Notes

1093-4. She (*zy*) refers to God's reason.

1094. 'This' (*dit*) refers to Catholic Eucharistic doctrine.

1095-1100. These lines are very close to lines 875-880, in which the Calvinists refuted central aspects of Catholic Eucharistic doctrine. Here, Vondel cleverly asserts what the Calvinists reject, for example by replacing *De razerny* (The madness) in 878-9 with *De mooghlijckheit* (The possibility) and *d'Almogenheit* (The Almighty), which both contain the morpheme *mo(o)g*, and which bespeaks potential. The second half of line 879 and line 1099

¹⁶⁵ Van Helten, *op. cit.*, Vormleer 96, para. 94.

are exactly the same, except for one word: *woest* (forcibly) and *licht* (easily). In both examples, Vondel is drawing on the Aristotelian distinction between substance and accident, which underpins Thomas Aquinas' defence of the doctrine of transubstantiation, and whereas the Calvinists in 879-80 believe that the accidents of the bread would have to be, as it were, forcibly ripped from their substance, for the Catholics, God can achieve this separation easily.¹⁶⁶

Zy geeft het lijf, op eenen zelven tijt,
Een plaets alleen; en oordeelt, dat het strijt
Met d'Almaght zelf, zoo harsse loos te stijven

Zy zet Godts lijf, op eenen zelven tijt,
In oost en west; en vint niet, dat het strijt
Met d'Almaght, zoo Godtvruchtighlijck te
stijven

De razerny van plaetselooze lijven;
De razerny, die woest den toeval scheid
Van zijnen gront, de zellefstandigheit

De mooghlijckheit van plaetselooze lijven;
d'Almogenheit, die licht den toeval scheid
Van zijnen gront, de zellefstandigheit.

1101. She (Zy) again refers to God's reason. 'The powerful Word' (*'t krachtigh Woort*), cf. Hebrews 4:12.

1103. The Dutch *'t Hooghgeloofde* (That which is highly praised) is one of several terms that Vondel uses for the Holy Sacrament instead of the word *sacrament*, which does not appear at all in the body of the poem. According to the *Woordenboek der Nederlandsche Taal*, it is created on the basis of an analogy with *het Hoogwaardig(e)*, which is in turn based on the Church Latin *venerabile*, and refers to the Holy Sacrament, or host. See also lines 841 and 907 above for other neologisms Vondel uses to refer to the sacrament.

1103-4. These lines pick up on lines 883 and 884. There the Calvinists accuse the Catholics of swallowing Christ and then digesting him: *zweelgh' // En dan verteer'*. Here, Vondel responds by saying that although they do swallow/ingest, they do not digest him: *zweelgh' // Doch niet verteer'*. Molkenboer points to a parallel phrase in Thomas Aquinas' *Lauda Sion: nec sumptus consumitur*: 'he is ingested, but not digested.'

The incarnation contradicts the enemy (1105-1122)

Commentary

Vondel's central point in this section is that if 'the enemy,' i.e. the Calvinists, believe in the miracle of the incarnation, then they must believe in the miracle of transubstantiation. The sense of the miraculous inherent in the incarnation is emphasized by Vondel by the frequent use of paradox in this section.

Notes

1105-6. 'Brain quick to anger' (*belghzieck brein*) refers to the Calvinists.¹⁶⁷ The point Vondel makes with the phrase 'stop gnawing with your gnashers' (*hou op van knagen // Met*

¹⁶⁶ Molkenboer notes that the argument in lines 1095-6 that the Eucharistic body can be in many places at the same time is found in Bellarmine 564 C (entitled *Posse unum corpus simul esse in pluribus locis*).

¹⁶⁷ Gerard Brom makes the point that with the term *belghzieck brein*, Vondel may also be referring to his own mind in the time before his conversion to Catholicism. Brom (1935), *op. cit.*, 188-9.

uw gebit) is that all the Calvinists believe they have before them in the Eucharist is bread. He tells them to stop chewing at this, because there is something greater to be had in the Eucharistif only they would assent to Catholic Eucharistic doctrine.

1106-7. 'Strengthen your weak stomachs' (*versterck uw zwacke magen*) recalls the stomachs of the Harpies, who stand for the Calvinists, in line 808. He refers to the elements of the Eucharist here as 'soul medicine' (*zielartsny*), a word he uses again in line 1608. It is interesting to note that we also find a similar term for the sacrament, *een medicine der ziele*, in a sermon on the Lord's Supper by a contemporary Calvinist preacher, Focco Johannes (born c. 1587), and so here at least, the language of the Catholic poet, Vondel, and a Calvinist have something in common.¹⁶⁸

1107-8. Vondel's argument here is that whereas the Calvinists easily accept the miracle of Christ's birth, on Christmas night, they do not accept (get angry at) the miracle of transubstantiation, which, for Catholics, occurred on the night of the Last Supper (Passover).¹⁶⁹

1108. Vondel spells the modern *Kerstnacht* as *Kersnacht* here and in other verses.¹⁷⁰

1108-9. Here, we meet one of several paradoxes in this section. The sense of paradox is heightened by Vondel's use of asyndeton to point to the divine nature of the child in 1109.

1109 ff. Molkenboer points to a passage in Bellarmine,¹⁷¹ which carries many of the same sentiments as those expressed here by Vondel: 'I would like to learn from our opponents, whether they believe in a Christ, who was a child, and who was really in the beginning enclosed in the narrow, dark womb of a woman.' A Calvinist response may be that of course they could believe in this, but that does not necessarily mean they have to accept the doctrine or reality of transubstantiation. They might say that there is no evidence for transubstantiation in the bible, or at least the term itself is not mentioned there. However, this of course comes down to the interpretation of John 6 and the passages recounting the Last Supper, and it is on these above all that Calvinists and Catholics disagree.

1111-12. Here is another paradox; that in Mary's womb Christ could not see the sun, which he as Creator God placed in the heavens.

1112-13. 'Her' (*haer*) and 'she' ([*ze*]) are feminine as 'sun' (*zon*) is feminine in Dutch.

¹⁶⁸ In a sermon published in 1653, Johannes refers to the Lord's Supper in ways that may be expected, such as 'a guest-meal', 'a heavenly meal' and 'a spiritual table,' but does also call it 'a medicine of the soul.' Dutch: *een gast-mael, een Hemelsche maeltijt, een geestelijcke tafel, een medicine der ziele*. See Focco Johannes, *Proef-Praedication Voorbereydinge tot het H. Avontmael des Heeren, Voorgesteld in XXX Praedication, in welcken aen-gewesen wert hoe wy waerdighlijck tot troost onser Zielen communiceren sullen, door Focco Johannes...* (3rd imprint) (Leeuwaarden: Tomas Willems Zuiertsma, 1653), 4. However, there were other Reformed preachers in this period who seemed keen to ensure that the elements were not conceived of as medicine, such as Casparus Streso (1603-1664) (Casparus Streso, *A Compendium*, 6th imprint (The Hague: Christoffel Doll, 1661), 2).

¹⁶⁹ With reference to this and the following lines, Jac Zeij writes that 'probably nothing more sublime has ever been written in [Dutch] concerning the great mystery that the God who became man dwelt for nine months under the heart of a Virgin and concerning the piety with which the Virgin worshipped her unborn child [*Wicht*] as God.' Zeij, *Vondel en de Moeder des Heeren*, quoted in Frijns, *op. cit.*, 405.

¹⁷⁰ See *Woordenboek der Nederlandsche Taal, Kerstnacht* for a history of the spelling of this word.

¹⁷¹ Bellarmine, *op. cit.*, 603C.

1113. A wonderful image of the sun arcing through the sky.

1114. ‘A clump of clay’ (*een’ klomp van klay*) refers to Mary,¹⁷² and the alliteration with the sound *kl* suggests a certain heaviness. This contrasts with the phrase *gezielde klay* (ensouled clay), used to refer to Christ in line 1088.

1116. Cf. lines 1085 and 1087, where Vondel also affirms article 30 of the Athanasian Creed, which states that Christ, even as a child, is fully God and fully human.

1117-8. Another paradox. Mary worships her unborn child as her God.¹⁷³

1120. Her fruit (*vrucht*) refers to Christ.

1121-2. The attention now shifts to the humanity of Christ. In the Dutch, we have an example of the need to elide *weenende* (weeping/tear-filled) and *ogen* (eyes), to maintain the metre. This type of elision is apocope.

Christ’s suffering renders the enemy speechless (1123-1151)

Commentary

Carrying on from the previous section, where Vondel argues that if his opponents, i.e. the Calvinists, can believe in the incarnation, they should be able to believe in transubstantiation, he argues here that although human reason finds it strange to worship a God who can die, this is exactly what they do in relation to Christ. Therefore, says Vondel, they should be able to acknowledge the limits of their human reason and believe in the doctrine of transubstantiation, which we are told is in accordance with divine reason. Vondel concludes the section with a dramatic analogy from the game of chess, before turning his fire directly on Calvin himself in the following section.

Notes

1123. Vondel addresses the Calvinists again, cf. 1105.

1124. Golgotha, the place where Christ was crucified, means ‘Place of the Skull’ (Matthew 27:33). Vondel coins the term *Dootshoofbergh* (literally ‘the mount of the head of death’) to allude to it here. He also uses *Dootshoofbergh* to refer to Golgotha in a 1642 poem, *Opdraght aen de Heilige Maeght*.¹⁷⁴

¹⁷² Frijns (*op. cit.*, 406) points to early Church writers such as Tertullian and Ambrose of Milan who refer to Mary in a similar manner. See also pp. 409-412.

¹⁷³ Frijns (*op. cit.*, 407) draws a parallel with lines by Anna Bijns. The correspondence is not exact, though the third line quoted provides another wonderful paradox of the incarnation: *Siet, hoe deeuwige blijchap daer leyt en weent // Als een ander jonc wichtken inder wiegen...// Die al de werelt spijst, moet hongeren en dorsten; // Der engelen broot, aldersaechts van corsten, // Hangt aender maget borsten vast gedrongen*. Bijns, *Nieuw Lof met nieuwen tongen*, str. 4, quoted in Anton Van Duinkerken, *Dichters der Contra-Reformatie : een bloemlezing* (Utrecht : De Gemeenschap, 1932).

¹⁷⁴ In line 35, he writes, *Het Kruis-lam zag u (Maria) op den Dootshoofbergh*. See Vondel, *De Werken, Deel 4*, 283. The *Statenbijbel* has *Hoofdschedelplaats* (Place of the Skull) for Golgotha.

1125. Cf. Psalm 22:6, where David says ‘But I am a worm.’

1126. Cf. Luke 22:44.

1128. Cf. lines 8-10 of an earlier poem by Vondel, *De Kruisbergh* (The Mount of the Cross), written in 1637/8 (see line 687 above).¹⁷⁵ Here, Vondel writes: ...*den gevlochten doornekrans, // Waer van de Goddelijcke glans // Beschaduwtd word en overwassen* (the twisted crown of thorns, // By which the Divine glory // Was overshadowed and covered).

1130. Vondel seems to be saying here that by the many wounds that Christ received in his Passion, he scourged the one wound of original sin placed on mankind by Adam. Here, as elsewhere, the text does not distinguish between ‘one’ (in modern Dutch *één*) and ‘a’ (in modern Dutch *een*).

1131. Cf. John 19:29.

1132-7. In these lines, Vondel enters an area of great dispute in Christian theology. To put the question succinctly, ‘Can God suffer?’ A classic response to this question, which seems to have been the position held by earlier Christian writers such as Anselm of Canterbury and Thomas Aquinas is that God does not suffer – or to use the specific language of the debate, God is impassible. In the Reformation, Martin Luther challenged this idea, arguing that God did share in the suffering of Christ on the cross. More recent scholars, such as the German theologian, Jürgen Moltmann (*The Crucified God* (1974)), who have recovered Luther’s theology of the cross (*theologia crucis*) argue that the event of the cross must be seen as one between Father and Son, in which God the Father suffers the death of his Son in order to redeem humanity.¹⁷⁶ Perhaps taking his lead from Bellarmine,¹⁷⁷ Vondel seems to steer a middle path, whereby he recognizes that the divinity of Christ suffered on the cross, but after the event of the cross, he has now been ‘transformed into an impassible Divinity’ (1137).

1132. Cf. John 19:34. In Christian tradition, the name given to the soldier who pierced Christ’s side is Longinus.

1137. I would expect *onlijbre* to be written *onlijdbre* (viz. *Woordenboek der Nederlandsche Taal*), so this is an example of syncope.

1138. Cf. I Corinthians 1:23.

1139. *’s wijzen* (of the wise) is an example of an adjectival noun whose declension is influenced by substantive declension.¹⁷⁸

1138-40. Vondel is being ironic here and asking a rhetorical question, in order to show that the Christian faith cannot be based on human reason alone. So, the argument goes, we must have faith that the Mysteries of the Altar are based on divine reason, and not try to judge whether or not they are correct by our fallible human reason.

¹⁷⁵ Vondel, *De Kruisbergh. Aen Magdalene Baeck*, in: *De Werken, op. cit., Deel 3*, 602.

¹⁷⁶ For a good introduction to this question, see McGrath, *op. cit.*, 273 ff.

¹⁷⁷ Molkenboer points to Bellarmine, *op. cit.*, 601D, where he considers things which are unworthy of the Majesty of Christ.

¹⁷⁸ Van Helten, *op. cit.*, Vormleer 109, Para. 105.

1145-8. Vondel borrow an image from the game of chess and suggests that his opponents, who rely on their human reason alone, are like a poor chess player who gets into difficulty and ultimately suffers checkmate as a result of his own poor moves. *Schaeckbert* is Vondel's rendering of the modern Dutch word *schaakbord* (chessboard), one which, according to the *Woordenboek der Nederlandsche Taal*, P. C. Hooft also uses in his *Nederlandsche Historiën*, and Constantijn Huygens Jr. in his *Journal*.

1149-50. In line 887, Vondel refers to the Calvinists who attack Catholic Eucharistic doctrine as being *dit spook met mist en stanck* (this dense, stinking spook). He may also be responding to their argument in line 882 that for the Catholics it is as though a man (the priest) (*stof en stanck*, which I translate as 'dust and decay') can 'create his own Creator' by uttering the words of institution at the celebration of the Mass.

1150. Jac. Zeij notes that the Dutch verb *blazen* has three meanings here: to trick someone, to expel air and to make a big fuss about nothing.¹⁷⁹ This is a good example of how difficult it is to do full justice to Vondel's poetry in translation.

1151. Goliath, as the margin note indicates, refers to John Calvin, whom Molkenboer suggests was introduced in this guise in lines 1057-60 above. As elsewhere, Vondel grossly oversimplifies Calvin's account of the elements in the Eucharist, when he argues that for Calvin the bread remains just that, bread, at the celebration of the sacrament.

Calvin trapped many thousand souls in the snare of his malicious ambiguity (1152-1174)

Commentary

In an article published in 1907, already referred to in this commentary, B. H. Molkenboer looks at the possible sources for Vondel's poem. Although Vondel himself never explicitly mentions him, Molkenboer adduces much evidence to support his contention that one of Vondel's principle sources is Cardinal Robert Bellarmine's (1542-1621) defence of the Catholic Mass, *Controversia de Sacramento Eucharistiae sex libris explicata*.¹⁸⁰ In some cases, the correspondence between Bellarmine's work and Vondel's may be more coincidence than the result of Vondel slavishly following Bellarmine, but this section of the poem clearly owes a great debt to the work of the Italian theologian. In section 391B, he sets out and critiques the Eucharistic theology of John Calvin in seven points and three short, additional points. In his 1907 article and in his later commentary on this poem, Molkenboer clearly sets out in each case how Vondel's argument parallels that of Bellarmine, and I draw on this to a great extent in what follows. However, I do not do this without criticism of our own, for it is clear that here, as elsewhere in this poem, Vondel, and by extension Bellarmine, do not do justice to Calvin's Eucharistic theology at certain points in their exposition of it. Bellarmine himself writes, 'we must briefly explain Calvin's opinion, because it is presented in a willfully ambiguous way by him, as if it had something of the mysterious about it,'¹⁸¹ which Vondel picks up on in line 1152 of his poem. Certainly there are those who would argue that Calvin adjusted his Eucharistic theology depending on who his intended audience

¹⁷⁹ Zeij, *op. cit.*, 60.

¹⁸⁰ See note to commentary on lines 305-328 above.

¹⁸¹ Molkenboer, note to 1152; Bellarmine, *op. cit.*, 391B. Latin: *Porro Calvini sententia breuiter explicanda est, quia de industria obscure ab illo proponitur, ut mysterii aliquid continere videatur.*

was, as he tried to steer a path between the Lutherans, the Zwinglians and other parties in the Reformation period. However, another view is that Calvin's Eucharistic theology developed over time, particularly as a result of the challenges he encountered from other theologians.¹⁸² Some detect a move towards Catholic Eucharistic theology in Calvin's work, and one contemporary, Heinrich Bullinger (1504-75), wrote to him, 'I do not see how your doctrine differs from the doctrine of the papists, who teach that the sacraments confer grace on all who take them.'¹⁸³ Recent commentators have drawn attention to similarities between the Eucharistic theology of Calvin and that of Thomas Aquinas,¹⁸⁴ much of whose theology Vondel draws on implicitly or explicitly in his poem,¹⁸⁵ and it should also be noted that Calvin often positions his own Eucharistic theology close to that of Augustine of Hippo,¹⁸⁶ a theologian for whom Vondel had much respect.¹⁸⁷ However, one aspect of Calvin's Eucharistic theology which did not change over time and which keeps him closer, in this case at least, to the theology of his fellow Reformer, Huldrych Zwingli, is the claim that Christ's ascended body must have the qualities of a body of a human being and so can only be in one place at one time, i.e. in heaven.¹⁸⁸ It is this point that Vondel, taking his lead from Bellarmine, ridicules in lines 1153-5, which I discuss in more detail below; but just because this creates a distance between the communicant and Christ, it does not mean that Calvin sees this distance as insuperable. Indeed, some would argue that in different ways, the Catholic Church has kept a distance between the communicant and Christ at certain points in its history.¹⁸⁹ Perhaps the key distinction, though, between Calvin's Eucharistic theology and that of Catholic theologians such as Bellarmine, is that whereas for Calvin, the souls of the faithful are lifted to heaven to be united to Christ in the mystery of the sacrament,¹⁹⁰ for Catholics, Christ is present at the altar on the consecration of the elements.

Notes

1152-4. Bellarmine's, and thus Vondel's, first challenge to Calvin is that for him, only the 'signs' (*teken[s]*) of the Eucharist, the bread and the wine, are on earth, whilst the body of Christ is in heaven. As a result of this, Christ's body is separated from the elements by a space (*tanto interuallo*), which is as vast as that which exists between the earth and the highest heavens (*quanto abest terra ab altissimis caelis*).

In response, I would say that it is true that in the first instance, the elements do remain on earth and Christ's body remains locally present in heaven (see also the commentary above), but this does not prevent Calvin from wanting to break down this distance and from wanting the communicant to be joined to the body of Christ in the celebration of the sacrament.¹⁹¹ In addition, Vondel's accusation that for Calvin the elements are mere signs is wide of the mark. Admittedly for Calvin they require the work of the Holy Spirit to be effective, but when the Spirit acts, he says, 'they are charged with great effect...and manifest [] his power.'¹⁹²

¹⁸² David Brown notes that over time, Calvin's Eucharistic theology seems to have become less Protestant, particularly in response to Lutheran challenges. See Brown, *op. cit.*, 412.

¹⁸³ Quoted in: Brian Gerrish, *Grace and Gratitude: The Eucharistic Theology of John Calvin* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1993), 3.

¹⁸⁴ Colwell, *op. cit.*, 9 (see n. 26 for further literature in this regard), and Brown, *op. cit.*, 413.

¹⁸⁵ See for example line 793 above.

¹⁸⁶ *Institutes*, IV, xvii, 28.

¹⁸⁷ See line 582 above and Molkenboer, 'Augustinus en Vondel,' in: *Vondelkroniek, jg. I, 1930*, 49-58.

¹⁸⁸ Brown, *op. cit.*, 412-413.

¹⁸⁹ *ibid.*, 414-415.

¹⁹⁰ *Institutes*, IV, xvii, 31.

¹⁹¹ Brown, *op. cit.*, 414-5.

¹⁹² *Institutes*, IV, xiv, 9. See also Colwell, *op. cit.*, 10.

1155. There is no e at the end of the adjective *schricklijck* (awesome) as Vondel sometimes omits this, when the final syllable is unstressed.¹⁹³

1156-7. Vondel's second point, again with reference to Bellarmine, is that for Calvin, although the signs and the body of Christ (*symbola et corpus Christi*) are very far from each other, they are somehow joined (*conjuncta*) together, not only by virtue of the sign, but also because God grants us the true body of Christ through (Molkenboer has *met* (with)) the sign, so that our souls partake of it unto eternal life. The manner in which Vondel writes line 1157 suggests that Calvin joins the signs and the body merely to be able to claim that believers do truly partake of Christ's flesh, but he concludes the line by saying that at other times Calvin resists this idea. Here, Vondel is trying to give a sense of the suspicion that Calvin changes his mind and his position on Eucharistic theology at will, something I discuss in the commentary to this section above. This is emphasized by his frequent use of *dan...*, *dan...* (now..., now...) in these and subsequent lines.

Here, Vondel and Bellarmine clearly have a valid point, for it is somewhat difficult to pin down exactly what Calvin asserts in relation to the joining of the signs and the body of Christ. In Institutes IV, xvii, 16, in response to the Lutheran doctrine of the ubiquity of the body, Calvin writes, 'If [the Lutherans] explained their meaning that, when bread is proffered in the mystery, a showing of the body is attached, on the ground that the truth is inseparable from its sign, I would not strongly object.' So, here Vondel and Bellarmine may find evidence to support their attack on Calvin, except that he talks of 'a showing of the body (*exhibitio*[/ *corporis*) [being] attached (to the sign)' rather than the body itself. Here, Calvin may be enacting a sleight of hand. But, perhaps it belies one of Calvin's guiding principles, which underpins his entire theology: the glory of God. A little later, in Institutes IV, xvii, 19, he writes,

But we must establish such a presence of Christ in the Supper as may neither fasten him to the element of the bread, nor enclose him in bread, nor circumscribe him in any way (all of which things, it is clear, detract from his heavenly glory).¹⁹⁴

Vondel and Bellarmine could take this along with the earlier passage as an example of where Calvin changes his mind and on the one hand says Christ is attached to the sign, and on the other, he is not attached to it. But perhaps Calvin's position is more subtle than this, such that Christ is attached to the bread to the extent that when the communicants partake of the bread, they are in some sense feeding on him, but he is not attached to it in the sense that he is enclosed by it or in any sense deprived of his glory and absolute freedom. Of course, there will be those who would accuse Calvin of sophistry, and of the same sort of argumentation as that employed by the scholastics, and they might say that surely such an important aspect of Christian theology would not depend on such involved reasoning, but this is a charge that could equally well be made against some aspects of Catholic Eucharistic theology.

1158. Vondel's third point is that in order to accommodate what appear to be two completely contradictory and mutually exclusive positions, Calvin admits that he does not understand how the body of Christ can be attached to the sign. Indeed, Calvin writes, 'I shall not be ashamed to confess that it is a secret too lofty for either my mind to comprehend or my words

¹⁹³ Van Helten, *op. cit.*, Vormleer 97, para. 94.

¹⁹⁴ Latin: *Nos vero talem Christi praesentiam in coena statuere oportet, quae nec panis elemento ipsum affigat, nec in panem includat, nec ullo modo circumscribat, quae omnia derogare coelesti eius gloriae palam est.*

to declare.¹⁹⁵ Vondel is picking up here on Bellarmine's attack on Calvin's assertion that 'it cannot be understood by the mind, how this union takes place.'¹⁹⁶

Some may see Calvin's position as a 'get-out clause,' others may see it as a mark of humility on his part. What is interesting, though, and something that Vondel does not pick up on, nor Molkenboer in his account of Bellarmine's attack on Calvin, is that Calvin appeals to the category of experience (Institutes IV, xvii, 32) in making his assertion, saying, 'I rather experience it than understand it' (*experior magis quam intelligam*). Experience is a category in Calvin's work which has perhaps received less attention than it deserves.¹⁹⁷

1159-60. Here, Vondel presents Calvin's solution to the question of how Christ in heaven is joined to the elements of the Eucharist, and how believers thus partake of him. He writes that for Calvin, the power of the body of Christ is mediated by the Spirit, as if through a pipe (*als door een buis*) (Bellarmine: *quondam vim substantialem ex Christi carne ad nos derivari per Spiritum eius tamquam per canalem quemdam*), picking up most probably on Institutes IV, xvii, 12, in which Calvin writes,

The bond of this connection is therefore the Spirit of Christ, with whom we are joined in unity, and is like a channel through which all that Christ himself is and has is conveyed to us.¹⁹⁸

There are several things to note here. First, Calvin is using figurative language: he says 'like a channel,' rather than 'a channel.' Secondly, although it may seem like another of Calvin's 'get-out clauses,' he ascribes the joining of Christ to the believers to the Spirit of Christ. One could challenge Catholic theologians to see whether they would not allow for the Spirit to work in this way, and thus in some sense circumscribe its power. Thirdly, in line 1160, Vondel seems to suggest that for Calvin, Christ is brought down to the believers from heaven. This is certainly one way of interpreting Bellarmine's summary of Calvin's assertion and indeed Calvin's assertion itself, but it is clear from other passages that for Calvin, the believer is taken up to Christ in heaven (e.g. Institutes IV, xvii, 18).

1161-2. Of these lines, which constitute the fifth point that Vondel appropriates from Bellarmine, Molkenboer says that out of fear that the reader might take too literally the sense that 'all that Christ [] is and has is conveyed to us,' Calvin says that this communion with Christ takes place through faith alone. Now, it is not completely clear what position it is that Vondel and Molkenboer, in his reporting of Bellarmine, consider that Calvin is taking, but perhaps the most fruitful way forward here is to repeat a distinction that Calvin himself makes, which, one might suspect, his opponents either do not see, or do not wish to see. For his fellow Reformer, Huldreich Zwingli, 'eating is believing,' and it is this position, that Calvin does not adopt, which Brian Gerrish seems to be alluding to when he says that here eating (the bread of the Eucharist) is simply a metaphor for faith: an outward sign of one's faith in Christ. Gerrish draws an important distinction between 'faith' and 'the effect of faith,' and says that for Calvin it is an effect of faith that the believer somehow has communion with the flesh and blood of Christ in the celebration of the sacrament.¹⁹⁹ This

¹⁹⁵ Institutes IV, xvii, 32. Latin: *fateri non pudebit, sublimius esse arcanum quam ut vel meo ingenio comprehendi, vel enarrari verbis queat.*

¹⁹⁶ Latin: *non posse ingenio comprehendi, quomodo fiat ista conjunctio.*

¹⁹⁷ See Joby (2007), chapter 2 for a further discussion of this question.

¹⁹⁸ Latin: *Vinculum ergo istius coniunctionis est spiritus Christi, cuius nexu copulamur; et quidam veluti canalus, per quem quidquid Christus ipse et est et habet, ad nos derivatur.*

¹⁹⁹ Gerrish, *op. cit.*, 130.

seems to encapsulate the point Calvin is making in Institutes IV, xvii, 5, and reminds us that for Calvin, when the faithful partake of the bread, they are not merely partaking of that bread, but are in some sense partaking of the flesh and blood of Christ.

In line 1162, Vondel almost seems to mock Calvin's rigid insistence that the ascended body of Christ remains in heaven, and more specifically, Christ 'sits at the right hand of the Father' (Institutes, IV, xvii, 18). For Vondel, this seems to undermine any claim by Calvin that believers can partake of the flesh and blood of Christ, and thus leads him to conclude that for Calvin, eating is only a metaphor for faith. However, Calvin himself goes on to explain this phrase, by saying 'that is, he reigns in the Father's power and majesty and glory,' and so it seems that for Calvin the phrase 'sits at the right hand of the Father' is much less about asserting Christ's physical location, than about an assertion of Christ's power.²⁰⁰

1163. Molkenboer quotes the relevant line from Bellarmine: *improbos non percipere corpus licet symbola percipiant*. A passage from Calvin's Institutes, which Bellarmine may be alluding to here, or at least one which expresses the sentiments he repeats,²⁰¹ is,

Thus nothing is taken away from the Sacrament; indeed, its truth and effectiveness remain undiminished, although the wicked (*impii*) go away empty after outward participation in it.²⁰²

The point that Calvin is making is that those who receive the sacrament can do nothing to diminish what is offered. He goes on, 'the flesh and blood of Christ are no less truly given to the unworthy than to God's elect believers.'²⁰³ The position of the Catholics he is rejecting is that if an unworthy person receives the elements, they will somehow cause the words of institution 'this is my body' to lose meaning.

1164-5. The final point that Vondel is making is that by Calvin's account there is really little point in the Eucharist, for what it offers, i.e. communion with Christ, has already been received through faith. Such a view of Calvin's thought would seem to have some substance, for in his Institutes IV, xvii, 5, Calvin says that the Sacrament 'reminds us that [Christ] was made the bread of life, which we continually eat,' and in the same paragraph that 'through [faith] believers gain Christ abiding in them.' However, he also says in the same paragraph that the Sacrament 'causes us to feel the power (*vis*) of [the] bread [of life]' (i.e. Christ). Later, (IV, xvii, 40), Calvin writes 'We see that this sacred bread of the Lord's Supper is spiritual food, as sweet and delicate as it is healthful for pious worshippers of God...'²⁰⁴ This assertion that the elements of the Eucharist are spiritual food, indeed spiritual medicine (healthful), takes us, perhaps unexpectedly, towards the language of Vondel himself (see lines 1107 and 1608), and so Vondel's (and by extension Bellarmine's) suggestion that the sacrament is of no spiritual significance to Calvin does not stand up to scrutiny. That said, from what we have seen in Calvin's writings, he does in some sense seem to want to have things both ways, suggesting that the believer can partake in Christ both without and with the sacrament. One might then enquire as to the extent to which he thinks that the believer can partake of Christ without the sacrament, and here I am not sure we could get a definitive

²⁰⁰ See also Brown, *op. cit.*, 414.

²⁰¹ *Institutes*, IV, xvii, 33.

²⁰² Latin: *Ita sacramento nihil decedit: imo illibata manet eius veritas et efficacia, quamvis ab externa eius participatione inanes discedant impii.*

²⁰³ Latin: *carnem et sanguinem Christi non minus vere dari indignis quam electis Dei fidelibus.*

²⁰⁴ Latin: *porro, quemadmodum sacrum hunc panem coenae Domini spiritualem esse cibum videmus, suavem ac delicatum non minus quam salutiferum piis Dei cultoribus.*

answer. But to turn the matter on its head, we could ask Vondel whether he believes that Christ is not in any way received before the distribution of the sacrament. To assert this, I would suggest, is to limit the freedom of God, and in some sense to circumscribe his power. The subjunctive *zy* (is) occurs here and elsewhere in Vondel's work in a clause of indirect speech.²⁰⁵

1166-67. There now follow three points which referring directly to three observations that Bellarmine makes at the end of his seven-point attack on Calvin's Eucharistic theology. The first of these in lines 1166-67 is to ask what in fact the great mystery (*aertsgeheim/summum mysterium*) is of which Calvin talks (or as Vondel and Bellarmine put it 'boasts' (*stoft/jactasse*). Calvin refers to the sacrament as a 'high mystery' (*tant[um] mysteri[um]*) in Institutes IV, xvii, 1, and as a mystery (*mysterium*) in Institutes IV, xvii, 32, and Vondel and Bellarmine are probably pointing out that because it seems that Calvin tries to explain the sacrament primarily on the basis of reason, then there is little left which could be termed a mystery.²⁰⁶ However, it should be noted too, that Vondel's own defence of the Mass relies heavily on reason, so one might equally well ask to what extent any mystery remains for him by the end of the poem.²⁰⁷

Vondel creates several compound nouns with the word *geheim* (mystery/secret) in this poem, such as *aertsgeheim* (great mystery) in line 1166. See line 300 above for further examples.

1168-72. Bellarmine's second additional note, adduced here by Vondel, is that all Calvin's 'boasting' (*encomia*) about the Eucharist, that the faithful who partake of it do truly and really (1169) partake of Christ's body, is vain prattle because all that there is in fact to partake of, by his account, is the simple sign (of the bread) (*nobis relinquit nisi nudum symbolum*). In response, all I can do is point to those many instances where for Calvin the elements of the Eucharist are more than mere signs (see for example lines 1152-4 above), although it is fair to say that if we do then try to pin down the ontology of the elements for Calvin, it is by no means certain that we shall get a clear answer.²⁰⁸

1171. The word I translate as '[fellow] communicant', *brootgast*, is another of Vondel's many coinages in this poem. The word 'his' refers back to Calvin.

1173-4. Bellarmine's third and final additional note, which Vondel recapitulates in these lines, seems in essence to repeat his seventh point in lines 1164-5 above, that there is little to be gained by Calvinists from partaking in the Eucharist, for they already enjoy the benefits of him through faith apart from and prior to the celebration of the Lord's Supper. The points I make above apply equally here.

²⁰⁵ Van Helten, *op. cit.*, Syntaxis 31, para. 176.

²⁰⁶ In note 5 to Institutes IV, xvii, 1, John T. McNeill writes 'the "mystery" (*mysterium*) is not treated by Calvin as an intellectual puzzle. It is [] inexplicable, but the emphasis is on the effectual transformation of the believer, through union with Christ.'

²⁰⁷ Molkenboer in fact contends that by the end of the three books of the poem the mysteries of the altar have been revealed to Vondel and the reason why he calls the work *Mysteries of the Altar* (*Altaergeheimenissen*) is that the sacrament is a mystery to non-Catholics, as Vondel himself once was, but one that can be penetrated, as far as is possible, by reading his poem. Perhaps the phrase 'as far as possible' (*zoo veel mogelijk*) reminds us that it must still in some sense be the case that, despite such a monumental effort, certain aspects of the sacrament remain a mystery to the poet. See Molkenboer, 'Het Voorwerk van de Altaergeheimenissen' in: *Vondelkroniek, jg. 1, 1930*, 109-124, at 109.

²⁰⁸ For evidence in Vondel's own time that Calvinists themselves were by no means united or clear about this, see the note to lines 1106-7 above, and my essay on the poetry of Constantijn Huygens, which includes references to his own understanding of the nature of the Eucharistic elements: 'Constantijn Huygens: Poet as Theologian,' in: *Return to Sender* (Amsterdam: AUP) (forthcoming).

Nature confirms daily the substantial changes of things from one matter to another (1175-1207)

Commentary

Vondel changes tack now and after having attacked Calvin's Eucharistic theology in the previous section, in this and the following section, he shifts the focus of his attention to affirming the doctrine of transubstantiation. In this section, he considers how various natural features undergo change and argues that such change should lead us to assent to the change of the substance of bread and wine into that of the body and blood of Christ on the consecration of the Eucharistic elements. Such changes may have seemed to have had something of the miraculous about them in Vondel's time, and indeed some may have seen a certain correspondence between them. But viewed with modern eyes, many of the changes he describes are not considered miraculous, and certainly not of the same order as transubstantiation, if, as seems to be the case, this is still considered to have something of the miraculous about it in the Catholic Church. However, even in Vondel's time, one difference between the change effected in transubstantiation and those changes effected in the examples he lists in this section, such as rain turning to plants (1185-89) and a mother's blood turning to milk (1194-1200), is that in these changes, the transformation is clearly visible, whilst the change which is deemed to take place in transubstantiation is not visible. Or to appropriate the language of Aristotelian metaphysics, certainly in the case of the mother's blood turning to milk, the accidents of the blood change, whilst the accidents of the consecrated elements in the Mass do not.

Notes

1176. Clearly what Vondel means here is transubstantiation. It is interesting to note though that he does not use the word here (modern Dutch: *transsubstantiatie*) or anywhere else in the entire 5,170 lines of the poem. Clearly this may be in part to do with the metre, but given that the doctrine of transubstantiation is one of the main themes, if not the main theme of the poem, its absence is surprising. The word, which in both English and Dutch comes from church Latin *transsubstantiatio*, was certainly used in a Dutch form by Vondel's time. A great opponent of the Catholic Church and in particular its Eucharistic theology, Marnix van St.-Aldegonde uses it in his *Biencorf der H. Roomschen Kercke* (Beehive of the Holy Roman Church),²⁰⁹ published in 1569, and several other occurrences pre-dating Vondel's poem are recorded in the *Woordenboek der Nederlandsche Taal*.²¹⁰ I have also noted that Vondel does not use the word sacrament in the entire poem either, and so there may be some poetic reason for his decision not to use either word.

²⁰⁹ Marnix writes *als dat de transubstantiatie ende wesentlicke veranderinghe soude ghescheiden niet met dese woorden Hoc est corpus meum, maer wt cracht van de benedictie die voorgegaen is* (if the transubstantiation and substantial change should happen not with these words *Hoc est corpus meum*, but as a result of the blessing that precedes them) See for example the edition on www.dbnl.nl, 32. The word also appears elsewhere in his work.

²¹⁰ An earlier example of the use of a Dutch equivalent of the Latin is listed in the *Woordenboek der Nederlandsche Taal* under the reference MICRON Gebr. D. Nachtm. E viii recto, 1552: *So en isser dan gheen Transubstantiacie, door de welcke het lichaem Christi in onsprekelijcke veel plaetsen ghedeylt soude moeten werden* (So there is then no Transubstantiation, by which the body of Christ is to be shared in innumerably (lit. unspeakably) many place).

Vondel inserts a svaribakhti vowel in the word *zellefstandigheit* (substance) (the second syllable) in order to maintain the metre.

1176-7. Vondel repeats the first four syllables (*'t Veranderen*) of line 1176 in the following line, possibly for emphasis or in order to show clearly that 1177 is an explication of 1176.

1178-9. As with 1176-7, Vondel repeats the opening syllables of the first line in the second.

1182-3. Vondel may be referring to the fact that Calvin limits Christ's ascended body to heaven, something which has radical implications for his Eucharistic theology. However, as Calvin himself notes in Institutes IV, xvii, 18, 'Christ is not prevented from exerting his power wherever he pleases, in heaven and on earth.'

1184. Vondel is referring to Christ here, whose divine nature is described in John 1 as the Word. In verse 3, he is described as Creator God, 'All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being.' In this line, Vondel is also talking about Christ as Providential God, who sustains life. Molkenboer glosses *schick* as *fatsoen, vorm* (form). This is incorrect as it means 'will' and refers back to the 'Omnipotent Word' rather than 'everything'.

1190-1. Vondel is referring here to the wedding feast at Cana, recorded in John 2, at which Christ turned water into wine. Vondel's reasoning is that if he could effect that miracle, surely he could effect one which involved turning wine into blood. Certainly, in this case at least, Vondel's argumentation seems to be robust and it is interesting to compare his view with that of the Calvinist, Constantijn Huygens. In what was probably his first poem on the Lord's Supper, written in 1642, Huygens seems to be saying that although he accepts the miracle at Cana (line one), he cannot accept the miracle that Catholics assert takes place in transubstantiation.²¹¹

1192-3. Molkenboer points to Bellarmine's reference to Alcuin, who said that God takes into account the weakness of man (*consulens Deus infirmitati nostrae*). Calvin, too, often says that God does certain things to accommodate human weakness, though he would clearly disagree with the Catholics on this particular point.

1201-2. 'Man's weakness' (*'s menschen kranckheit*) picks up on 'the weak mind of man' (*'t zwack gemoet der menschen*) in lines 1192-3 above.

1205. The alliteration in this line: (*dit*) *wonder wercken* (work (this) miracle) is reminiscent of a line from a poem by Constantijn Huygens on the Lord's Supper: *En 'twas een wonder-werck* (And it was a wonder-work/miracle). Huygens adds to this effect in the first line of the poem when he writes, with reference to the wedding at Cana recounted in John 2, *Gij*

²¹¹ Joby (2008), *op. cit.*, 38-39, Poem 1. I say 'seems to be saying' for Huygens does not explicitly mention transubstantiation in the poem, but rather refers to 'the strife-filled ground for discord without end.' F. L. Zwaan (*op. cit.*, 41) takes this, along with '[a] miracle [that] has [been] feted' in line 7, as a reference to transubstantiation. Although this is not beyond contention, it seems the most likely reading, and it is certainly the case that in other poems on the Lord's Supper (for example Poem 10 in Joby (2008), *op. cit.*, and a poem to his friend Tesselschade Visscher in Appendix 2 of the same collection), Huygens, as one would expect, rejects transubstantiation, although it may well be argued that his understanding of the doctrine by no means reflects the subtlety of it, as expounded by theologians such as Thomas Aquinas (see note to line 793 above).

maeckte Water Wijn: dat's klaer als wijn of water (You made the water wine: that's clear as wine or water).²¹²

1205-7. The point here is that if God can effect the miracle, as Vondel understands it, of turning blood into milk, then surely he can change wine into blood. But, as I note in the commentary to this section, Vondel does seem to be mixing his categories. When blood turns to milk, it is clear that the accidents change, although whether Vondel would have believed that the substance changes as well is not entirely clear. However, in transubstantiation the accidents remain the same, i.e. the form, colour, smell etc. of the elements, whilst the substance is considered to change into that of the body and blood of Christ. Vondel might respond that, as he understood it, the change from blood into milk is still a miracle of the same order as that of the turning of wine into blood, but this is a different point and not the one he is making here.

The miracles of the Old Testament confirm these changes (1208-1224)

Commentary

In this section, Vondel points to a number of miracles from the Old Testament and says that if the reader accepts these, then they should accept the miracle of transubstantiation (1217-20). In English, we see a series of 'if' clauses (protasis), leading up to the apodosis, beginning with 'then' (*dan*) in 1217. In the Dutch, the 'if' clauses are effected by inverting the verb and the subject. Molkenboer notes that Bellarmine also points to miracles from the Old Testament in his defence of the Mass,²¹³ and he in turn refers to passages where Ambrose of Milan does something similar.²¹⁴ In order to make his case more strongly, Vondel says that one of these miracles at least was effected by the agency of 'the Word (of God).' The Word of God made flesh is, according to the Gospel of John (chapter 1), Christ, and Vondel himself makes the link in lines 1223-4. This link puts the relationship between the Old and New Testaments in a slightly different light for Vondel than that which we see elsewhere in the poem, where the Old Testament is seen as something much less worthy than, and a mere prefiguration of, the New Testament.

Notes

1208. This reference to Aaron's rod (*Arons roede*) is drawn from Numbers 17:8.

1210. Memphis (*Memfis*) is synecdoche for Egypt, cf. line 168. The ten plagues that God visited upon Egypt are recounted in Exodus 7-8.

1211. 'The leader' (*De[] leitsman[]*) probably refers to Moses, as in lines 198, 237 and 255 above. But, according to Exodus 7:9-10, it is in fact the staff of Moses' brother, Aaron, which turns into a snake before Pharaoh. This may be a misreading of the biblical text by Vondel.

²¹² Joby (2008), *op. cit.*, 38-39, Poem 1, ll. 1-2. Bredero also uses this alliteration at the start of his poem *Lof van de Ryckdom* (Praise of Riches), *Wonder werct God in al syn werck* (God works wonders in all his work).

²¹³ Bellarmine, *op. cit.*, 507B and C.

²¹⁴ Molkenboer also notes that Vondel's friend, the Amsterdam pastor, Leonard Marius, does the same in *Amstelredams Eer ende opcomen*, *op. cit.*, 197.

1212. In Exodus 7:17-20, the Nile is turned into a river of blood.

1213. As discussed in the commentary above, it is the Word of God which for Vondel is the agency by which the plagues are visited on Egypt, and this provides a link to the miracle of transubstantiation in lines 1220-4, which is effected by Christ, the Word made flesh. In the Old Testament passages, though, it is the word spoken by God, which enacts these miracles. The plague of frogs is referred to in Exodus 8:5-6. The Dutch *vorsschen vormen* (bring forth frogs) is alliterative.

1214-15. 'Dust ensouled' (*het stof gezielt*) refers to the dust that turned into gnats in Exodus 8:17. There is no specific mention of worms in the plague narratives, but the use of the verb *grimmelen* (to teem with) recalls line 262, where Vondel uses the same verb to refer to the Jews collecting the Manna in the wilderness.

1215. This refers to man, made in the image of God (Genesis 1:27). Earlier (line 1114) Vondel refers to Mary as a clump of clay (*een' klomp van klay*), and Christ as 'ensouled clay' (*gezielde klay*) (line 1088).

1216. When fleeing Sodom, Lot's wife looked back and became a pillar of salt (Exodus 19:26).

1217. If God did all the things described in lines 1208-1216, which the bible tells us he did, then, Vondel reasons, we should believe in transubstantiation, the Catholic doctrine reaffirmed at the Council of Trent.

1218-19. Vondel paints a wonderfully imaginative picture of the divine substance being covered in the 'unaccustomed clothes of accident' (*ongewoone kleden van toeval*) i.e. the colour, form, smell etc. of the consecrated bread, which hide what lies beneath them: 'the light of Divinity,' i.e. Christ.

1219. Vondel uses the masculine and neuter genitive form 's...s for a feminine noun *Godheit* ('s *Godheits*) (of Divinity).²¹⁵

1220. Vondel's exhortation to the reader not to trust their 'weak eyes' (*zwack gezicht*) is another example of him telling us not to rely our senses in assenting to the doctrine of transubstantiation. He makes a similar point in the opening lines of his poem on the title page, *Op de Tittelprint van d'Altaer-Geheimenissen*, and in lines 547, 762-3, 869 and 1073-81 above.

1220-1. *Woort* (Word) is placed in the fourth syllable of each line for emphasis, referring to Christ, the Word made flesh.

1223. This line is a good example of the balance Vondel often achieves in his poetry. Here, *Dat zelve Woort* at the start of the line is balanced by *de zelve kracht* at the end of it.

²¹⁵ For other examples of this, see van Helten, *op. cit.*, Vormleer 55, para. 65, esp. notes 1 and 2.

Reason confirms this change and the existence of accident without substance (1225-1238)

Commentary

Vondel devotes this section to supporting the doctrine of transubstantiation using the Aristotelian notions of first and second cause. According to this way of thinking, God is first cause of everything, and this includes the accidents of bread, such as colour, form, taste etc. This being so, he does not need the second cause, in this case the substance of the bread, in order to sustain the accidents of the bread. On this basis, he argues, it is possible that the accidents of the bread can persist, even without the second cause of the substance, which is removed in the process of transubstantiation.

In his commentary on the poem, Jac. Zeij argues that there is a wonderful symmetry in this section, which demonstrates Vondel's poetic prowess. In short, the schema begins with line 1232, which echoes 1231; next we take lines 1233-4, which are almost a repeat of lines 1229-30; finally, lines 1235-8, which echo much of lines 1225-8. To give but two examples of how this schema works, in line 1225, he refers to *'s hemels Alvermogen* (heaven's omnipotence) and in line 1238, he talks of *Gods almacht* (God's omnipotence). Again, in line 1226, he writes *toeval, wien zijn grontslagh wort ontogen* (accident, whose substance (ground) is removed) and in line 1235, he writes *rust toeval op zelfstandigheit zoo vast* (if accident rests so firmly on substance), where *grontslagh* (1226) and *zelfstandigheit* (1235)²¹⁶ are synonyms referring to substance. Clearly the symmetry is not what one might call perfect, but Zeij has certainly identified a pattern worthy of note.

Notes

1228. *Werreckrijck* (rich in works) includes a svaribakhti vowel (the second one) to fit the metre.

1231. Here, Vondel is referring to *creatio ex nihilo*, which since the time of Augustine of Hippo has been the account of creation (from nothing) which has been given the most weight in the Christian tradition.²¹⁷

1232. 'Unlimited power' (*onbepaelt gebiet*) refers to God's unlimited power. Here, as in the previous section, it is the Word that is seen as the divine agent active in the world.

1237-8. Vondel concludes with a rhetorical question, again making the point that (limited) human reason is no match for God's omnipotence. It is of course this omnipotence which underpins the doctrine of transubstantiation. To this one might respond, that indeed transubstantiation is a possibility, given God's omnipotence, but that does not necessarily mean that this is what happens at the celebration of the Eucharist.

The creation of light confirms the existence of accident without substance (1239-1266)

Commentary

Molkenboer notes that the argument that Vondel presents here is drawn from Bellarmine,²¹⁸ who in turn refers to St. Basil.²¹⁹ The argument itself would now be seen as erroneous, but

²¹⁶ Axters (*op. cit.*, 103) notes that words such as *zelfstandigheit* and *toeval*, a Dutch version of the Latin *accidens*, are already to be found in H. L. Spiegel's *Twe-spraack vande Nederduitsche Letterkunde*.

²¹⁷ McGrath, *op. cit.*, 296ff.

was used by Vondel and contemporaries as a proof that the accidents of something can persist even in the absence of their substance, or ground. According to Genesis 1 ('Moses' in line 1239), God created the light on the first day (vv. 3-5), but did not create the sun, the moon and the stars, whence light came, until the fourth day (vv. 14-19). Thus, it was believed that during the intervening period, there was light, the accident, without the stars, in particular the sun, the substance or ground. In the final part of this section, lines 1255-66, Vondel adduces this as evidence that the accidents of the Eucharistic elements can persist without their substance, as this is changed into the substance of Christ's flesh and blood.²²⁰

Notes

1239. Moses is traditionally seen as the writer of the book of Genesis.

1244. The 'day-torch' (*de daghtorts*) is the sun.

1245. As in the preceding sections, it is the Word of God that is the active agent of divinity in the world. Cf. Psalm 33:6, 'By the word of the Lord the heavens were made,' and Genesis 1:14, 'And God said, 'Let there be lights....'

1249. 'Blazing eyes' (*blakende oogen*) refers to the stars, which were created on the fourth day.

1250. 'That light' (*dat schijnsel*) is the 'bright flame' (*heldre vlam*) of line 1243.

1250-53. Here, we see Vondel's argument, discussed in the commentary above, that for the three days after God had created light and before the sun, moon and stars were created, God himself sustained the light. 'A base' (*zetel*) is used by Vondel as a synonym for 'ground' or 'substance'. A translation of St. Basil *sedes*, literally 'seat,' in a similar context (see note to the commentary to this section). Although both the Latin and Dutch words are closer to the English 'seat', 'base' seems more appropriate for the translation.

1254. Vondel concludes this first part of the section with an aphorism, which again reminds us that at the core of his defence of the doctrine of transubstantiation is God's (*his/zijn*) omnipotence.

1260. Vondel describes himself as a worm (*worm*) in line 17 and Christ as an earthworm (*aertworm*) in line 1125. In those lines and here, he is drawing on Psalm 22:6, where David describes himself as a worm.

1262. The paradox that the treasure of salvation cost the blood of Christ on the cross is emphasized in the Dutch by the use of *schat* (treasure) in the first half of the line and *bloetschat* (blood (so dear/like treasure)) in the second half, which is another of Vondel's many coinages in this poem.

²¹⁸ Bellarmine, *op. cit.*, 648B.

²¹⁹ Probably the Cappadocian father, Basil of Caesarea (c. 330-79). He wrote that the light of the sun *absque sede et vehiculo tribus diebus* (was without ground (seat) or vehicle for three days). As Basil wrote in Greek, this would have to be a translation of his work.

²²⁰ Zeij, *op. cit.*, 68.

1263-4. Molkenboer suggests that Vondel is alluding here to words from Gregory the Great, *Fides non habet meritum cui humana ratio praebet experimentum* (Faith which rests on the experience of human reason does not have merit).

1264. This and several of the subsequent lines find echoes in Aquinas' Eucharistic hymn, *Lauda Sion* (see also lines 577-8 above). Lines 2-3 run *lauda ducem et pastorem // In hymnis et canticis* (praise thy leader and shepherd // in hymns and songs).

1265. The phrase 'under the form of fruits, so different' (*onder schijn van vruchten, zoo verscheiden*) finds an echo in the line *sub diversis speciebus* (under various kinds) from the *Lauda Sion*.

Christ's body is undivided and the same under different signs (1267-1275)

Commentary

A central feature of Catholic Eucharistic theology is that on consecration, the substance of the bread and wine is the same, i.e. that of Christ's body and blood. It is this that allows Catholics to assert that they do not lack anything by only partaking of one kind (the bread) in the Eucharist, whilst Calvinists and other Protestant denominations insist on taking the elements in both kinds.

Notes

1267-68. As in the previous section, we find echoes of the *Lauda Sion* in these lines. It runs *manet tamen Christus totus, sub utraque specie* (However Christ remains undivided, under each kind). *Kruimgestalte* (form of bread) is one of Vondel's many coinages in this poem.

1269-70. Cf. *Lauda Sion, Caro cibus, sanguis potus...non confractus, non divisus: integer accipitur* (Food from flesh, drink from blood...(he) is not broken or divided: he is received undivided).

1271. A good example of balance in a line of Vondel's poetry, with the *al breekt* before the caesura balanced by *noch breekt* after the caesura. Cf. *Lauda Sion: Fracto demum Sacramento // Nulla rei fit scissura* (Only the sacrament is broken...let there be no rending of the substance/thing (i.e. Christ's body)).

1273. Cf. *Lauda Sion: Sumit unus, sumunt mille: // Quantum isti, tantum ille* (Whether one eats, or a thousand eat: they consume as much as him).

1275. This assertion contradicts the Calvinist position that Christ cannot be (fully) present on every altar at which the Eucharist (i.e. the Mass) is celebrated, as he is limited in time and place to heaven. See commentary to lines 1152-74 above.

...and in many places at once; just as one and the same sun manifests itself in many streams and mirrors (1276-84)

Commentary

In this short section, Vondel makes an analogy which finds echoes in a similar analogy made many years earlier by Albert the Great (c. 1200-80). Vondel argues that just as the sun is one, but its many rays can be seen in many different streams and mirrors at one time, so Christ's body is one, but can be in many different places, i.e. on many different altars, at the same time. This is certainly a powerful analogy, but, to the modern mind at least, it does not increase the likelihood that those who do not assent to the doctrine of transubstantiation would be persuaded to do so on reading it.

Notes

1279-83. In a sermon on the sacrament, Albert the Great once said 'If you break a mirror into many small pieces, then you will still see your face in each piece. The mirror is multiplied, but your face remains intact and unchanged.'²²¹

1284. Vondel concludes with an aphorism, as is often the case. The point he seems to be making is that the sun (the righteous light) can shine in all places, and likewise Christ is available to all, great and small. However, this seems to be a slightly different point from the one being made in this section as a whole, which is that though he is one, Christ can be present on many altars simultaneously.

...just as the soul is undivided throughout the body and in every limb, even according to the view of the Non-Romans (1285-1292)

Commentary

Here, again Vondel seems to take his lead from Bellarmine,²²² as he adduces another argument to support the notion that the body of Christ can be in many places at the same time.²²³ In this section, he suggests that just as the soul can occupy different parts of the body without being divided, so too the body of Christ can be in many places, i.e. on many altars, at the same time, without in any way being divided. He supports the assertion in the marginal note by saying that this view of the soul is one supported by non-Catholics, too.²²⁴ There are two points to make in response to this passage. First, as I assert in the previous section, an analogy *per se*, however appropriate it may be, does not prove the truth of that which it is used to illustrate, i.e. even if it is the case that the soul occupies different parts of the body, but itself remains intact, this does not necessarily prove that Christ's body is present on many different altars at the same time. Secondly, it is interesting that Vondel is making his argument here based on the nature of the soul, rather than on the body. This may lead some to think that Vondel is using the characteristics of one category, the spiritual, to

²²¹ *Sermones Ratisbonae* MDCCCXCIII, 82.

²²² Bellarmine, *op. cit.*, 567D.

²²³ See also Molkenboer (1907), *op. cit.*, IV, 131.

²²⁴ Indeed, in Institutes I, xv, 6, Calvin says that the soul animates all the parts of the body, and a little later repudiates those who think there is more than one soul in the body.

make assertions about those of another, the material.²²⁵ Alternatively, it may lead us to ask whether he understands the body, i.e. the body of Christ, as simply material. He talks in line 1269 of ‘that flesh, that blood,’ but elsewhere seems to conceive of Christ’s body in different terms.

Notes

1289. A good example of balance between two parts of a line. The line starts and ends with forms of the verb *ontleden* (to dissect).

1291. A wonderful image alluding to what is considered to be the divine origin and nature of the soul.

...just as God was everywhere and also in Solomon’s temple (1293-1304)

Commentary

In short, Vondel’s argument here is that God is everywhere and cannot be contained, as King Solomon observed (see line 1293 below). This is further evidence for Vondel that Christ can be on many altars simultaneously. John Calvin makes a similar point in Institutes IV, I, 5 in relation to an episode concerning the Persian leader Xerxes recounted by Cicero.²²⁶

Notes

1293. In I Kings 8:27, (King) Solomon asks ‘But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Even heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain you, much less this house that I have built!’

1294. It is interesting to note that whereas the English language uses the same word, ‘substance,’ to describe both that which is deemed to change in the consecrated elements of the Mass, and that which the three persons of the Trinity share in common, Dutch uses two different words. For the former, it typically uses *zelfstandigheid* (e.g. line 1217) (literally, that which stands on its own) and for the latter it uses *wezen* (literally, essence). In the Nicæan Creed, for example, the line ‘being of one substance with the Father’ is rendered in Dutch as *één van wezen met de Vader*.

1296-8. These lines refer to the ark of the covenant. God was deemed by the Israelites to dwell with them in the ark, but Vondel’s point is that despite this, God was not limited or circumscribed by the ark. The two cherubim made for the ark in Solomon’s temple are described in I Kings 6:23ff. (not II Kings (IV Kings in the Vulgate) as Molkenboer tells us), and the cloud (*welkin*) which covered it whilst the Israelites were at rest in the wilderness is described in Exodus 40:34ff. In l. 1298, the ‘head of the Priests’ (*’t hooft der Priestren*) sought God’s counsel in the ark.

²²⁵ This is a distinction which John Calvin was very keen to affirm. He talks of the need to ensure that there is no ‘mixing’ as he called it of spirit and matter. See Joby (2007), *op. cit.* 145-6. Whether Vondel understood such a division, or even affirmed it, requires further study.

²²⁶ Cicero, *Laws*, II, x, 26.

1303-4. The image of infinity that Vondel may be drawing on here is that of a snake, which forms a (never-ending) circle, by biting its own tail.²²⁷

...and is everywhere the mid-point and circumference; (1305-10)

Commentary

Vondel continues to view God as a circle, but also as a being much greater than a circle, for whereas the centre of a circle is only in one place, God's centre is everywhere and no mind, indeed no thing, can grasp or limit the radii or circumference of God, which is, of course, not the case for those of a normal circle.

Notes

1307. There is arguably an element of anthropomorphism here, although it may be seen as poetic flourish.

1308-9. 'Places beyond number' (*endelooze steden*) is again suggestive of the numerous altars, on which, according to Catholic Eucharistic theology, Christ can be at any one time. Molkenboer quotes Bellarmine as saying 'Whilst God is one and indivisible, He yet remains in countless places (*in infinitis locis*), for He is present intact in all created things. This surely goes beyond man's reason.'²²⁸

...just as the one divine Substance is common to the three Persons; (1311-1330)

Commentary

Here, Vondel continues to seek ways to support his assertion that Christ can be on many altars at the same time, again drawing on Bellarmine.²²⁹ In this section, he uses the argument that, just as the three Persons of the Trinity share one substance (*Wezen*), it is equally possible for Christ's substance to be present on many altars. He also draws on some analogies for the Trinity drawn from Augustine of Hippo such as that of a tree consisting of three parts, roots, trunk and branches, to support his argument.

Notes

1313. As in line 1294 above, here and in the marginal note, Vondel uses the word *Wezen* (essence) for that which is common to all three Persons of the Trinity, which is rendered in English as 'substance.'

1314. The *Woordenboek der Nederlandsche Taal* refers to this particular instance of the word *hemeltroonen*, which seems to have been another of Vondel's many coinages in this poem, and defines it as 'throne(s) in heaven.' Molkenboer takes the definition one step further and

²²⁷ Cf. Zeij, *op. cit.*, 70. We also see this symbol carved into the decoration of the banisters on the staircase leading up to the pulpit in the St.-Bavokerk, Haarlem. See Joby (2007), *op. cit.*, 136.

²²⁸ Bellarmine, *op. cit.*, 567D.

²²⁹ Bellarmine, *op. cit.*, 568B.

refers to Revelation 4:8, and Vondel's play *Lucifer*, lines 337ff.,²³⁰ in both of which the idea of heavenly choirs singing is present. I follow Molkenboer here, though one does have to make something of a jump to get to this meaning.

1319. We also find the use of the sun and its rays as an analogy for the divine in the work of John Calvin, e.g. Institutes III, xiv, 18.

1320-1. Augustine of Hippo uses these analogies for the Trinity in his *De Fide et Symbolo*.²³¹

1322. It is slightly confusing that Vondel refers to the three persons of the Trinity here as *zelfstandigheden*, for the singular form of this word, *zelfstandigheid*, is the word that he uses for the substance of Christ, which is assumed by the consecrated elements of the Mass (cf. line 1313). Although the three persons of the Trinity are, according to orthodox Christian theology, of one substance, the Dutch word being used in this poem, as in the Dutch translation of the Nicæan Creed, is *wezen*. In theory, there should be no ontological difference between *wezen* and *zelfstandigheid*, but it is not clear why two different words are used and further whether by using *zelfstandigheid* to refer to the persons of the Trinity, Vondel is either being slightly loose with his language of metaphysics, or he is not taking full account of the subtle yet important difference between the one divine substance and the three persons of the Trinity.

1328-30. Vondel concludes the section by returning to his main theme and argues that just as the one divine substance is common to all three Persons of the Trinity, so Christ's substance can be on many altars and in many instances of the elements at the same time.

... just as both natures, God and man, are common to one person. (1331-1354)

Commentary

Again, Vondel uses an argument we find in the work of Cardinal Bellarmine,²³² and this time he asserts that just as the Person of Christ is common to both of his natures, the human and the divine, so Christ is present at many altars simultaneously.

Notes

1331. *Aertsgeheimenis* (great mystery) captures the Latin *summum mysterium*. See also lines 576 and 1166, where Vondel uses a similar term, *aertsgeheim*.

1332. Christ's second birth was from the womb of Mary, as opposed to his first birth, recorded in the Nicæan Creed, 'Christ... true God from true God, begotten not created.'

1336. 'O wonderful exchange' (*o wonderlijck gespan*) captures the Latin *o admirabile commercium* from the Christmas liturgy of the Catholic Church.

²³⁰ The choir at the end of the first act sing 'Holy, Holy, and once more Holy, // three times Holy, praised be God' (*Heilig, heilig, nog eens heilig, driemaal heilig: eer zij God*) (337-8), a rehearsal of the Trisagion and an allusion to the daily Mass liturgy.

²³¹ Migne, P. L. *Vol. XL* (Paris: 1865), cols. 189-90.

²³² Bellarmine, *op. cit.*, 568C.

1338. Cf. Luke 1:35.

1340. Cf. Luke 1:26.

1341. *Uyt den hoogen* (from on high), which is in the dative, is an example of how the nominal declension influenced the declension of adjectival nouns in Vondel's poetry (see also 1348 below).²³³

1342-3. Cf. Luke 1:37.

1343. The 'guardian of heaven' is of course God. We find the Dutch word, *Hemelvooght*, (in the *Woordenboek der Nederlandsche Taal* under the lemma *Hemelvoogd*) in the work of authors writing slightly before Vondel, such as Bredero, and elsewhere in Vondel's own work.²³⁴

1344. 'Matter and soul' (*element en ziel*) refer to humanity. Vondel uses the word *element* to refer to matter twice in his play *Lucifer*: line 457, and 695.²³⁵

1345-7. Molkenboer points to words from the Christmas liturgy, which may have informed these lines of Vondel's: *id quod fuit permansit et quod non erat assumpsit, non commixtionem passus neque divisionem* (That which he was, he remained, and what he was not, he took on, but did not suffer mixing or division).²³⁶

1348. According to the Gospel of Matthew 1, Christ's earthly father, Joseph, was descended from King David. *Den tweede* (the second) is an example of how the nominal declension influenced the declension of adjectival nouns in Vondel's poetry.²³⁷

1349-50. Vondel here again alludes to the fact that for him, Christ (one fire, i.e. the sun) is present on many altars simultaneously.

1351. Cf. *Ratio ancilla theologiae* (Reason is the handmaiden of theology).

1354. The greatest schools, which use reason, have to fold their wings before faith. Molkenboer suggests this is an allusion to the peacock, though the reference to climbing high may point to another sort of bird, or birds in general.

²³³ Van Helten, *op. cit.*, Vormleer 109, para. 105.

²³⁴ Bredero uses the word for God, in the form *Hemel-Voocht*, in his poem *Lof van de Ryckdom* (Praise of Riches) (l. 19), which he wrote in 1613, but which was not published until after his death, in 1620. See *De Werken van G. A. Bredero*, eds. G. Kalff et al., 3 delen., deel 3 (Amsterdam: Binger, 1890), 88. Vondel uses the word in his re-working of Virgil's Aeneas (Book II, ll. 1121-2): *Ghy mooght Kreüze niet met u uit Troye brengen: // De groote hemelvooght wil geensins dit gehengen (toestaan)*. See Vondel, *De Werken*, Deel 6, 479. H. L. Spieghel also uses the form *hemel-voogd* in his work, *Hert-Spieghel* (Book IV, l. 153)

²³⁵ Molkenboer has 696 for the latter reference, though it is 695 in the recent edition edited by Riet Schenkeveld-van der Dussen (Amsterdam: Bert Bakker, 2004). The line runs, *De mensch beware dan zyn eigen element* (Let man then keep his own matter).

²³⁶ Although Molkenboer may well be right, it is interesting to inquire as to the extent that the new convert, Vondel, would have been able to experience the Christmas liturgy in mid-seventeenth century Amsterdam. This requires further investigation.

²³⁷ Van Helten, *op. cit.*, Vormleer 109, para. 105.

Capernaum's coarse misunderstanding still holds many people in unbelief (1355-1374)

Commentary

Vondel returns to John 6, in which the Gospel writer records how the people of Capernaum did not understand what Christ was saying about himself in words such as 'I am the living bread...the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh' (v. 51). It is the response of the people of Jews in the next verse, when they ask themselves 'How can this man give us flesh to eat?' that provides the occasion for Vondel's discourse here. As elsewhere in the poem, we should read attacks on the people of Capernaum as attacks on the people of Geneva, i.e. the Calvinists, whose centre of activity was the Swiss city (cf. lines 947ff. above).

Notes

1357. Molkenboer draws a parallel between this line and Bellarmine's attack on the Sacramentarians²³⁸ who wanted to 'measure everything with human reason.'²³⁹ *d'oneindigheid* (the unendingness) refers to the infinity of God, cf. lines 1303-4 above.

1358. Cf. John 6:52.

1360. Here, Vondel is making the point that the nature of the body of Christ under the form of the elements is different to that of his body whilst he was on earth. From lines 1375 onwards, he goes on to discuss the many changes that Christ's body underwent to open up the possibility that the nature of the body under the consecrated elements could again be different from the nature of his body during his life on earth. However, as I discuss above in the notes to lines 837-8, towards the end of the poem, in lines 1608-12, he seems to suggest that the nature of the body under the consecrated elements is of a similar order to that of those who partake of the elements. So it does seem here at least that Vondel is being inconsistent. Perhaps one can be generous and say, as Vondel would probably admit, that he does not in fact know what the nature of the body under the consecrated elements would be.

1361. Cf. the line from Aquinas' Eucharistic hymn *Lauda Sion, non mittendus canibus* ([the true bread] is not to be given to dogs). Cf. line 1430 below.

1362-3. A double question, almost mocking the Jews at Capernaum in John 6:52. Attention is drawn to the lines by starting each with the same four syllables, *Hoe kan ons dees*.

1368. A good example of alliteration is given here: *schuim der schole* (dregs of the disciples), which is emphasized with *schuddende* (shaking) in the next line.

1370. Cf. John 6:60.

1371-2. 'The Head, which...' (*het hooft, // 't Welck...*) refers to Christ.

²³⁸ Those Protestants who rejected the doctrine of Real Presence. For Bellarmine (and Vondel) this would doubtless include the Calvinists, although Calvin himself did not reject this doctrine. See Institutes IV, xvii, 32, and Colwell, *op. cit.*, 169.

²³⁹ Bellarmine, *op. cit.*, 462A.

1372. The Dutch adverbs *slecht* and *recht* (simply and righteously) provide a good rhyme. Constantijn Huygens works with the same rhyme, only reversing the words, and using them as adjectives, in a poem on the Lord's Supper he wrote in 1642.²⁴⁰

1373. *'t wonderwoort* (the wondrous word) has an alliterative quality to it which echoes that of (*dit*) *wonder wercken* (work (this) miracle) in line 1205 above.²⁴¹

Christ changed his body in many ways (1375-1442)

Commentary

(1375-1382) This section acts as an introduction to the longer section (1375-1442), in which Vondel discusses twelve ways in which Christ's body took on a different form. His argument is again that if we accept that Christ's body did take on these different forms, then it should be clear that Christ's body is also able to take on a form by which it can be present under the accidents of the consecrated bread and wine in the Mass. Molkenboer points to a likely source of inspiration for Vondel, a section of Bellarmine's defence of the Mass, entitled *Posse corpus alicubi esse, & locum non occupare* (That a body occupies somewhere and yet nowhere).²⁴²

Notes

1376. 'Anticipated for many centuries' i.e. foretold in the Old Testament by the Prophets.

1380-2. Vondel refers to his own doubts before his conversion to Catholicism.

Commentary

(1383-8) The first change that Christ's body underwent was to enter the womb of the Virgin Mary before his birth on earth.

Notes

1383. Vondel begins the description of this change of Christ's body and the next two with the same phrase: *'t Was geestgewijs*. Molkenboer glosses this as *op de wijze van een geest, spiritualiter, onlichamelijk*, i.e. in the manner of a spirit, in a spiritual sense, incorporeally. Although Vondel's argument here is that because Christ's body has taken on different forms, it is also possible for it to take on a form which allows it to be present under the accidents of the consecrated elements of the Mass, it does seem strange that he describes Christ's body as 'in the manner of a spirit,' even 'incorporeal' if we take Molkenboer at his word. For although Vondel would surely reject the idea that it is 'in the manner of a spirit' that Christ's body is present in the consecrated elements, this language does come dangerously close to that of his opponents. Some may argue that Vondel is using poetic language here, but we should remember that this is a didactic poem, where Vondel is clearly trying to convince us

²⁴⁰ *Gunt mij het recht, het slecht, het oud, het all-gemeen...gebruijck* (Grant me the true, the one, the old, the catholic...usage). See Joby (2008), *op. cit.*, 38-39, lines 9-10.

²⁴¹ Bredero also uses this collocation in his poem *Lof van de Ryckdom* (Praises of Riches) (l. 4), *Een wonder Woordt wert hier geseyt* (A wonder-word was spoken here). *De Werken van G. A. Bredero, op. cit.*, 88.

²⁴² Bellarmine, *op. cit.*, 576D.

of the truth of the Mass and the doctrine of transubstantiation. Perhaps it also points to the fact that it is ultimately probably beyond the capabilities of language to express the way in which Christ is present in the celebration of the Eucharist, though it also reminds us that the language of poetry can reveal sentiments that otherwise might remain hidden.

‘Soul and Divinity’ (*ziel en Godt*) refers to the two natures of Christ, fully man and fully God (cf. article 30 of the Athanasian Creed).

1385. In Ezekiel 44:2, we read ‘The Lord said to me: This gate shall remain shut; it shall not be opened, and no one shall enter by it; for the Lord, the God of Israel, has entered by it; therefore it shall remain shut.’ For obvious reasons, theologians used this image, the gate of Ezekiel (*d’Ezelchielsche poorte*), as an allusion to, or prefiguration of, Mary’s virginity.²⁴³

1387. Cf. Galatians 4:4, ‘But when the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law.’

1388. ‘Here’ (*hier*) refers to the world.

Commentary

(1389-92) In this second example of the way in which Christ’s body underwent change, Vondel refers to Christ’s resurrected body. Again, Vondel starts this example as he started the first example with the phrase *’t Was geestgewijs* (It was in the manner of a spirit).

Notes

1390. Cf. Matthew 28:2.

1392. Molkenboer glosses *blick op blick* as *straal op straal* (ray upon ray), which is an image used by the medieval Flemish mystic, Jan Ruusbroec.²⁴⁴

Commentary

(1393-8) This is the third example of how Christ’s body has undergone change, which, as with the first two examples, begins with the phrase *’t Was geestgewijs*. Here, Vondel alludes to the post-resurrection body of Christ. In John 20:19, Christ visits the disciples, even though the doors of the house where he encountered them were locked. A similar appearance is recounted in Luke 24:36ff., though here there is no mention of the doors being locked.

Notes

1394. ‘Oak or iron work’ (*eick of yzerwerck*) refers to the locked doors through which Christ came to appear to his disciples in John 20:19ff. The bible account does not in fact tell us what the doors were made of.

²⁴³ See also Frijns, *op. cit.*, 413-5.

²⁴⁴ Molkenboer does not give a reference in Ruusbroec’s work. For an overview of the mystical imagery of Ruusbroec, see my *God by Sea: A Collection of Poems by the Twentieth-Century Flemish Poet Karel van de Woestijne (1878-1929)* (Lampeter: Edwin Mellen Press, 2010), 27-32.

1395-6. 'It' (*Het*) in 1395 refers to the body of Christ (*'t Hooghwaerdigh lijf*) in line 1375, as does 'its' (*zijn*) in 1396. *Ellef* (eleven) in 1395 contains a svaribakhti vowel (the second one) to help keep the metre.

1398. One of several examples of polysyndeton in the poem.

Commentary

(1399-1400) The next three examples of how Christ's body changed defy the law of gravity. Of course in 1645, when this poem was published, Newton's work on the laws of gravity still lay in the future, but clearly it was felt that Christ was defying the natural order of things in these episodes.

Notes

1399. This refers to the episode of Christ walking on the water of the Sea of Galilee recounted in Matthew 14:25ff. Christ's body here is described as *luchtigh*, which Molkenboer glosses as *licht, zonder lichamelijke zwaarte*, i.e. 'light, without bodily weight,' and which I translate as 'weightless'. Again, we must remember that it is not Vondel's intention to say here what precise form Christ's body might take under the consecrated elements of the Eucharist, but rather to indicate that it did in fact take many different forms, including those described in this and subsequent lines.

1400. Cf. Acts 1:9, in which Christ ascends to heaven.

1401. Now we shift to the form Christ's body takes when he has been raised to glory in heaven. Vondel uses a similar phrase to *door kreits op kreits* (through the heavenly spheres) in *Lucifer*, line 11, Belial: *Hij steigert steil, van kreits in kreits, op ons gezicht*. (He (Beelzebub) climbs, from sphere to sphere, up to us). In both cases, Vondel is working on the basis of the Ptolemaic world view, in which the earth is at the centre of ten heavenly spheres.²⁴⁵

Commentary

(1402-4) Vondel now points to Christ's body on the cross.

Notes

1402. 'It was passible' (*'t was lijdelijck*) contrasts with 'impassible' (*onlijdelijck*), the manner in which Christ's body was received at the Last Supper, which Vondel discusses in the next section. See 1132-7 above for a discussion on the question of whether God can suffer.

1402-3. Cf. John 19:1-3. Line 1403 is a good example of asyndeton in the Dutch.

1404. The line contains the alliterative *het hing aen 't hout*, with *gehoont* from the end of the previous line adding to this effect.

²⁴⁵ By now, the Copernican revolution was well underway, so whether Vondel still believed in the Ptolemaic world view or this is merely a poetic device would require further investigation. A clear diagram of the Ptolemaic system is given in: Dante Alighieri, *Paradiso*, trans. and ed. Robin Kirkpatrick (London: Penguin, 2007), lxxxiv.

Commentary

(1405-8) The next transformation of Christ's body that Vondel discusses is the form that it took at the Last Supper, when, for Catholics such as Vondel, it was believed that the bread and wine of which the disciples partook had truly taken on the substance of Christ's own flesh and blood.

Notes

1405. The Last Supper took place on the night before Christ was crucified. The Liturgy of the Mass has the words *pridie quam pateretur* 'on the day before he would suffer.'

1408. According to the Gospel of Matthew (26:17-19), the Last Supper was prepared as a Passover meal, though the Dutch *Paeschgeheimenis*, another of Vondel's neologisms in this poem, can in theory point both to Passover and to the feast of the New Covenant, Easter, something which the adjective used in the translation, 'Paschal,' retains.

Commentary

(1409-10) This section is most likely a combination of two separate events in Christ's life, when he managed to evade the attempts of the Jews who rejected his message. The first is recounted in Luke 4:28-30. Here, Christ came to Nazareth and began to preach in the synagogue. He was driven out by those who opposed him and they led him to the brow of the hill on which the town was built in order to throw him off it. But he slipped through them and got away. In the second event, recounted in John 8:59, Jesus is in the temple courtyard at Jerusalem. He tells a crowd '...before Abraham was, I am.' Those listening 'picked up stones to throw at him, but Jesus hid himself and went out of the temple.' Jac. Zeij notes that many scriptural exegetes have explained this by saying that Christ made himself invisible. Whether this was in fact the case in this and the first example is perhaps open to question, but this does not stop Vondel from using them as another two examples of how Christ was able to change the form of his body, which for him is further evidence that his body can take on a form which allows it to be under the consecrated elements of the Mass.

Notes

1410. Vondel refers to the temple at Jerusalem as *de kerck* (lit: the church). This may belie a certain insensitivity to the distinction that Jews would wish to draw between their religion and Christianity, or it may merely be an instance of where Vondel would expect his readers to know what he means.

Commentary

(1411) Here, Vondel is referring to the Transfiguration of Christ in Matthew 17:2 and Mark 9:2ff. Traditionally, the mountain which Christ ascended with several of his disciples, which is merely referred to as a 'high mountain' in the biblical texts, was considered to be Mount Tabor. However, modern scholars reject this.²⁴⁶

²⁴⁶ See for example, Donald A. Hagner, *Word Biblical Commentary, Volume 33B, Matthew 14-28* (Dallas: Word Books, 1995), 492. Mount Tabor is rejected here on the grounds that there was a Roman post there at the time.

Commentary

(1412-13) In these two lines, Vondel points to Christ's post-resurrection body. He appeared to his disciples on several occasions after his resurrection, but the occurrence which is referred to here is the episode in John 20:27, in which he invites (doubting) Thomas to put his finger into Christ's wounds.

Commentary

(1414-16) Attention now shifts to Christ's appearance to Saul, who later became Paul, on the road to Damascus. For Vondel, Christ's body here takes on yet another form.

Notes

1414. In Acts 9:3 ff., as Saul was going to Damascus, 'a light from heaven flashed around [Saul]' and Christ asked him 'why do you persecute me?'

1415. 'The Cilician' (*Den Cilicer*) is Saul/Paul, who, we are told in Acts 22:3, was born in Tarsus in Cilicia. Molkenboer gives the reference Acts 20:3, which is incorrect.

1416. Acts 8 talks of Saul's persecution of the followers of Christ, which preceded his conversion.

Commentary

(1417-1442) Here, Vondel recapitulates what he has just described, i.e. the different forms that Christ's body has taken and then, as we have come to expect, he returns to his main theme, the Eucharist, and argues that because Christ's body has taken on these different forms, we should accept the view that it can take on a form, in which it is present under the consecrated elements of the Eucharist.

Notes

1418. The word *geestgewijs* (in the manner of a spirit) is used by Vondel in lines 1383, 1390 and 1393 to describe the first three forms of Christ's body that he discusses and *luchtigh* (weightless) is used in line 1399 to introduce the next three forms the body takes.

1419-20. In these two lines, Vondel places one set of adjectives, which describe different forms which Christ's body took at certain points, directly above what are in some sense opposites of these adjectives: (*en*) *lijdelijck* ((both) passible) over *onlijlijck* (impassible), and *tastbaer* (tangible) over *onzichtbaer* (invisible). In relation to the form *onlijlijck*, we usually see this in the form *onlijdelijck*, as we do in line 1406 above. What is effectively the assimilation of the *d* in the following *l* is not uncommon on Vondel's poetry.²⁴⁷

1421. Here, Vondel places two extreme cases side by side, the glorified body of Christ in heaven and the body 'made vile' (*verworpen*) on the cross.

²⁴⁷ For further examples, see van Helten, *op. cit.*, Vormleer 25, para. 36.

1426. This alludes to how Christ's body appeared to Saul in Acts 9:3.

1428. Molkenboer places a question mark next to the phrase in *'s Apostels hant*. My suggestion is that it refers to Christ's appearance to the disciples in John 20:27, in which he invites (doubting) Thomas to put his finger into Christ's wounds, referred to earlier in line 1412.

1430. In referring to his opponents, and by extension those of the Catholics, as dogs, Vondel recalls the literature of invective of this period. Cf. line 1361 above.

1431-2. The idea that Christ changed the form of his body many times 'for the sake of man' (*om 's menschen wil*) echoes John Calvin's notion of accommodation.²⁴⁸

1433. The reference to 'scales' (*schubben*) here seems odd. Molkenboer suggests this may be a reference to the rhetorical question in Jeremiah 13:19, 'Can Ethiopians change their skin or leopards their spots?' This captures the sense of what Vondel is getting at in this line, though it does not explain why he refers to 'scales' and not to 'spots'.

1434. In the Dutch, this line is wonderfully balanced before and after the caesura and it comes quite close to being a verbal palindrome.

1435. God (here: 'heaven' *hemel*), in the person of Christ, offers himself in the consecrated elements of the Eucharist, cf. *pan[is] de caelo* (bread from heaven) in the Liturgy of the Mass.

1436-8. These lines refer to the terrible consequences of Adam and Eve eating the forbidden fruit in the garden of Eden (Paradise) (1436), and then express a longing for the fruit of the tree of life, which refers to the food Christ offers as a result of his work on the cross. Cf. lines 59 ff. above.

1439-40. It is not clear if Vondel has any particular time or practice in mind when he refers to 'month to month' (*maent tot maent*) in line 1439, but with 'day after day' (*dagh op dagh*) in line 1440, he seems to be referring to the practice of taking communion daily. Perhaps he is reflecting an awareness that taking communion generally became more frequent in his time than it had been in the Middle Ages. As Molkenboer points out, he may also be pointing to the fact that communion was enjoyed more frequently than the Passover lamb was eaten by the Jews of the Old Testament (cf. line 184), although it was not uncommon for Christians only to partake of the Eucharistic bread once a year in the Middle Ages.²⁴⁹

1441. *Heilgenot* (O salvific joy) is another of Vondel's neologisms in this poem.

1441-2. Vondel concludes this section with praise for the sacrament and a rhetorical question, which includes repetition to heighten the sense of drama here.

²⁴⁸ For a brief introduction to this, see McGrath, *op. cit.*, 257-8.

²⁴⁹ See also Brom (1935), *op. cit.*, 247.

The partaking of Christ's body renews for you the memory of his bitter suffering (1443-1510)

Commentary

The focus in this section is on Christ's Passion. An important aspect of the Eucharistic liturgy is the anamnesis or calling to mind of his sacrifice on the cross. Early in the section (1453-1465), Vondel suggests that before the incarnation of Christ, God had given signs in the Old Testament to remind his people of his good deeds and blessings (1454). But now there is something far greater to remember, he tells us, and from 1472 to the end of the section, he takes us step by step through the Passion of Christ, drawing on the Gospel accounts of the events leading up to and including Christ's death on the cross and his burial in the tomb for three days (1510).

Notes

1443. 'JESUS' ray of light' (*JESUS strael*) is somewhat reminiscent of the arrows that pierce Teresa of Ávila's heart, perhaps best represented in Gianlorenzo Bernini's sculpture of her in the church of Santa Maria della Vittoria in Rome.²⁵⁰

1444-5. 'God's Lamb' (*Godts Lam*) refers to Christ, cf. John 1:29.

1446. In the consecrated elements, Christ is substantially present according to Catholic Eucharistic theology, though the accidents of the bread, its colour, taste etc., persist.

1450. This line contains a good example of polysyndeton in the Dutch.

1455. Vondel refers to mankind as '*s weerelts ingezetten* (the world's inhabitants) in line 1246 and here as '*s aertrijcks ingezetten* (the citizens of earth). Molkenboer points to Psalm 111:4 (Vulgate 110:4), which talks of God's wonderful deeds (*mirabili[a] su[a]*), and to Bellarmine's defence of the Mass.²⁵¹

1456. This refers to the Manna placed in the holy of holies (278-9 above) and the shewbread (lines 97ff.), which pointed back to it, which was eventually placed in the Temple. As in line 1410 above, Vondel uses the word *Kerck* to refer to the Temple at Jerusalem, a point emphasized by reference to the Old Covenant in the next line.

1459. Cf. line 170, where Vondel refers to the 'annual slaughter of the chosen lambs' (*jaerlijx bloên der uitgekeurde lammeren*).

1460. 'The blood of Abraham' (*het bloet van Abraham*) refers to the Jews.

1461. A reference to the Angel of Death, which passed over the houses of the Jews, marked with the blood of lambs, and killed the first born of the Egyptians. Cf. 171 above.²⁵²

²⁵⁰ Cf. Molkenboer's gloss of the word *strael*: *pijl* (arrow), *liefde* (love).

²⁵¹ Bellarmine, *op. cit.*, 600D.

²⁵² Constantijn Huygens refers to the Angel of Death in the opening lines of his sonnet, *Paeschen* (Passover), from the cycle of poems *Heilige Dagen: Den Engel is voorbij: de grouwelicke Nacht // Der eerstgeborenen is bloedeloos verstreken: // Ons' deuren zijn verschoont; soo warensse bestreken // Met heiligh Paeschen-bloed, dat d'uijtgelaten macht, ...* (The Angel has passed over: that night of fear and dread // For Israel's first-born sons has ended without stain. // Our lintels have been spared, for touched and daubed they were // With holy Passion-

1462. 'The yoke of slavery' refers to the time of Israel in Egypt.

1463-5. Vondel comes back to one of his central themes; that the episodes and subjects he refers to from the Old Testament, such as the Manna and the Passover lamb are but precursors of the coming of Christ and the institution of the Eucharist.

1466. Cf. line 1132, where Vondel refers to Christ as *Zijn hart, Godts hart* (His heart, God's heart).

1468. Cf. Galatians 3:13. The form *smert* was still common at this time, though not in current Dutch. Vondel also uses the form *smart*.²⁵³

1469. Cf. John 13:1 and the liturgy of the sacrament: *mens impletur gratia* (the soul is filled with grace).

1470. Molkenboer points to the frequency with which the notion of being sated (or to eat one's fill) occurs in biblical narrative relating to feeding, e.g. Exodus 16:12 and John 6:26. This notion is also included in the liturgy of the sacrament.

1471. Catholic liturgy includes the words *recolitur memoria passionis eius* (the memory of his passion is called to mind).

1472. Cf. Isaiah 63:3.

1473. Cf. Matthew 26:39 and Luke 22:42.

1478-9. Cf. Luke 22:44: '...and his sweat became like great drops of blood...' Vondel effects a hendiadys in the Dutch: *daeuw en droppen* (lit: dew and drops) (cf. line 694). As the reader will note, this is also alliterative, and Vondel effects alliteration in the next line with (*Van*) *top tot teen*, (From) top to toe, which he also uses in lines 1058 and 1288.

1481. The reference to Samson is an allusion to Christ, who like Samson is able to overcome his enemies. Vondel refers to episodes in Samson's life which prefigure Christ in lines 338ff. above.²⁵⁴

blood, so that the power unleashed...) See Zwaan, *op. cit.*, 103, ll. 1-4. The present author will be publishing an edition of this sonnet cycle in due course.

²⁵³ Viz. the lines, *De slingerstaert en 't achterlijf ... krimpde van bijstre smart* in the poem *Vrye Zeevaart naer Oosten* in *De Werken van Vondel*, ed. J. van Lennep, Volume 7 (Amsterdam: Binger, 1858), 740, ll. 8 and 10.

²⁵⁴ The poet also uses the figure of Samson to allude to Christ elsewhere in his work. Samson is one of the Old Testament figures Vondel describes in his *Helden Godes* (Heroes of God) (Vondel, *De Werken, Deel 2*, 350-1). Line one of the poem on Samson starts *Ick was een Nazir Godts* (I was a nazirite to God). This refers to Judges 16:17 and the word nazirite means one, who is separated or consecrated (here, to God). There are those in the Christian tradition who have linked this word, here ascribed to Samson, to the name of the town of Nazareth, where, according to the gospel of Matthew (2:23), Christ was brought up (see Donald A. Hagner, *Word Biblical Commentary, Vol. 33A, Matthew 1-13* (Dallas: Word Books, 1993), 41). Vondel also makes the link between Samson and Christ in his 1641 play, *Peter en Pauwels* (Peter and Paul), where line 259 runs, *Ghy Samson, die den mont des afgronts op kost sparren* (You Samson, who could open wide the mouth of hell). Finally, in the play *Samson*, published in 1660, Vondel again works on this analogy in lines 1675-77, where Samson is cast as a prefiguration of Christ.

1482. Cf. Luke 22:43. We also remember that another precursor of Christ, Elijah, took strength from an Angel, an episode Vondel refers to in line 319 above.

1486-7. Vondel refers to man as an earthworm (*aertworm*) in line 1260 above. He also refers to Christ as an earthworm (*aertworm*) in line 1125. Here, he places the word *worm* in the same position (i.e. as the fourth syllable, just before the caesura) in each line, first to refer to man and then to refer to Christ.

1488. 'The garden' (*den hof*) is named as Gethsemane in Mark 14:32 and Matthew 26:36.

1489. Cf. Matthew 26:40-45.

1491-2. The High Priest was Caiaphas, to whose house Christ was taken (John 18:13-24) before he was taken to Pilate, who administered justice on behalf of the Roman authorities (the Roman court) (*'t Roomsche Gerecht*).

1493. The mountain is that of Calvary.

1494. Alabaster (*albast*) is a form of gypsum, often white, with streaks which are often red, and so is the perfect material with which to allude to the body of Christ during the Passion.

1497. Vondel effects a good example of asyndeton in the Dutch: *dat..., dat..., dat...*

1497-8. The mocking of Christ recounted in Matthew 27:28-30.

1502. Note the alliteration of *Die beecken bloets* (Those becks of blood).

1504. This line has a wonderful balance to it, divided by the caesura after the fourth syllable. It is the word *geeft* (gives) that provides the balance.

1504-5. Cf. Matthew 27:50-52.

1505-6. Cf. Luke 23:44.

1508. Cf. Mark 15:34;37.

1510. Molkenboer suggests that the phrase 'causing the stars to cry' (*om 't welck de starren schreien*) recalls old paintings in which the angels are depicted as crying at Christ's death.

...makes his gain yours (1511-19)

Commentary

Following on from the previous section, in which Vondel describes Christ's Passion, Vondel shifts the focus to reminding us that Christ's death allows the faithful to enjoy God's grace by partaking in the Eucharist. Christ is now in heaven, but the faithful can still participate in him in the sacrament which feeds not only the soul, but also the body (1519).

Notes

1511. Molkenboer reminds us that Vondel repeats the phrase ‘As often as’ (here: *zo menighmael*) at several points in this part of the poem, e.g. 1443, 1519, 1543, 1563. He takes his lead from I Corinthians 11:26, in which Paul writes ‘For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.’ The Vulgate has *quotienscumque*, which differs slightly from the form Molkenboer gives, *quotiescumque*. The Dutch word translated as ‘Food of Sacrifice,’ *Offerspijs*, is the title of Book I, the current book, of this poem.

1515. Cf. Hebrews 7:25 for Christ’s ongoing intercession on behalf of humanity.

1516. Cf. Psalm 110:1.

...strengthens your weaknesses (1520-1542)

Commentary

Here, Vondel points to the manner in which the Eucharist is in some sense a medicine (*artsenye*) (1529) to heal the wounds of sin. He contrasts it in particular with the food that Eve (and of course Adam) ate in the Garden of Eden, which, according to Christian tradition, gave rise to original sin, and in some of his most highly-wrought lines of the entire poem (1538-41), he contrasts that food with the food that Christ offers in the Eucharist.

Notes

1520. Here, Vondel starts the line with the phrase *Zoo menighmael* (As often as), which I discuss in detail in 1511 above. See John 3:3;5;7 for the idea of being reborn in Christ. Vondel talks of being reborn in the font, i.e. baptized.²⁵⁵

1527-30. Molkenboer tells us that Vondel is taking his lead from Ambrose of Milan here, who, as Bellarmine records,²⁵⁶ affirms daily communion as it is a ‘medicine’ against daily sins. Vondel uses the word medicine (*artseny(e)*) elsewhere in Book I to refer to the Eucharist: lines 70 and 422 and also *zielartseny* (soul medicine) to refer to it in lines 1107 and 1608.

1529. The Dutch *bluts en buil* (wound and swelling) is alliterative.

1532. i.e. the law of Christ. Cf. ‘the new covenant’ of line 1520.

1533. Molkenboer points to Bellarmine’s frequent use of the word *languor*, alluding to the debilitating effect of sin.

²⁵⁵ Gerard Brom discusses the fact that Vondel himself was not re-baptized when he became a Catholic but rather grew into the fullness of the baptism he underwent as an adult member of the Anabaptist (Mennonite) community. Brom (1935), *op. cit.*, 199. For an excellent account of the history of the Anabaptists in the Netherlands in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, see: S. Zijlstra, *Om de ware gemeente en de oude gronden: Geschiedenis van de dopersen in de Nederlanden 1531-1675* (Hilversum: Verloren, 2000). See also pp. 487-9 for a short account of Vondel’s place in the Anabaptist literary culture.

²⁵⁶ Bellarmine, *op. cit.*, 726C.

1538-9. Each of these two lines contains a contrast between the food (*de spijs*) of Eve (1535), which brought original sin into the world, and the food (again: *de spijs*) of Christ, which rectifies that sin. Each line is balanced on the caesura, with the food of Eve, which ‘causes grief’ and ‘spoils’ before it, and the food of Christ which ‘helps us forget pain’ and ‘rectifies all’ after it. As the reader will note, the sound of each line in the Dutch is very close.

1540-1. In these two lines, Vondel continues to work with the theme of lines 1538-9, and again contrasts the food of the Garden of Eden (the ‘forbidden food’ of 1540), which brought original sin into the world, and the food Christ offers (the ‘offered food’ of 1541), which rectifies this. The reader will note, as with the two previous lines, that each line is almost identical in the Dutch, but they differ, critically, in their initial and final syllables.

...strengthens the bond of communion and peace (1543-62)

Commentary

The partaking of Christ’s body brings unity to the Church. Vondel tells us (1543-6) that by sharing in Christ’s Eucharistic body, divisions can be overcome and an example of how this can be achieved is to be found in the very bread itself which is shared at the Eucharist (1547-55). For this bread comes from many grains of wheat, each different, but they are bound together in the oven into one bread, and so we find a lesson here of how the Eucharist draws together thin and fat, big and small (1547-8) to share one bread. The theme of unity is continued in lines 1555-6, with reference to the notion of the members of the Church being one body, with Christ as its head, and Vondel concludes the section (1559-62) with reference to the early church, described in the Book of Acts, which remained united and shared possessions equally.

Notes

1543. As in lines 1511, 1520 and 1527, Vondel begins this line, and the section, with the phrase ‘As often as’ (*Zoo menighmael*).

1547-53. Molkenboer points a close relationship between these lines and a commentary by Augustine of Hippo on St. John’s Gospel, where he writes, ‘Christ has offered us his flesh and blood under forms that despite their variety have been united as one. One (the bread) consists of many grains of wheat, and the other (the wine) consists of many grapes.’²⁵⁷ Bellarmine also refers to this image, though here Vondel only refers to the bread.

1550. *Spijsgenoten* is another of Vondel’s coinages in this poem, translated here as ‘fellow communicants.’ It is not listed in the *Woordenboek der Nederlandsche Taal*.

1554. Cf. I Corinthians 10:17.

1555. i.e. the many grains of wheat become the Eucharistic bread, under the form of which Christ’s flesh is present, when it is consecrated.

²⁵⁷ Migne P.L., *Vol. XXXV*, col. 1614.

1556. Cf. Ephesians 4:15-16.

1559; 1562. Cf. Acts 4:32. Sion (1559) refers to Jerusalem.

...feeds the soul unto immortality, cleanses her stains (1563-82)

Commentary

Here, Vondel provides a wonderful description of how the soul, though sullied by original sin (1570-2), is purified by sharing in the Eucharist and so can return to its maker, God, in heaven (1569 and 1581). The soul also encourages the body, to which it is attached, to rise up to be with God (1570-79 and 1582).

Notes

1563. As in several previous lines (1511, 1520, 1527 and 1543), Vondel begins this line, and the section, with the phrase ‘As often as’ (*Zoo menighmael*), drawing on I Corinthians 11:26.

1565-6. The phrase ‘As a pledge of salvation’ (*Tot onderpant der zaligheid*) echoes the words of the Liturgy, *pignus futurae gloriae* (a pledge of future glory).

1568-9. ‘The courts of Eternity’ (*'t hof der Eeuwigheit*) refers to heaven. ‘She’ (*zy*) refers to the soul, which is feminine in Dutch.²⁵⁸

1571-2. As often in the poem, Vondel provides an analogy to make his point. Here, he likens the effect of original sin (Adam’s body) to that of rust eating into metal.

1573. ‘The coarse and clumsy clump of earth’ refers to man. Mary is referred to as a ‘clump of clay’ in line 1114.

1575. Cf. 2 Peter 1:4, where the author talks of the faithful becoming ‘participants in the divine nature.’

1580. i.e. the human soul was created by God.

...and strengthens a seed of incorruptibility in the body, by which it obtains the glorious resurrection (1583-1608)

Commentary

This section begins with a very long sentence (1583-92). Vondel’s argument here is that the sun in the sky (1583) does not give life to what is on earth to the same extent that Christ (the Sun of Sacrifice in line 1589) gives life, as he is able to effect a resurrection of the body of those who have long since died (1590-5). He then provides a wonderful trope, contrasting those who gain the benefits of the sacrament, depicted as bees, and those who do not, who could be non-Catholics, as spiders, who suck only poison from the sacrament. Vondel, still

²⁵⁸ Though the *Woordenboek der Nederlandsche Taal* does note occasions where it is masculine or neuter.

speaking through John the Evangelist, tells us that John was one of the bees and he in some sense pollinated the world with his gospel, a world which is drawn together by ‘communion in one body’ (1607).

Notes

1583. The ‘seed of incorruptibility’ in the marginal note refers to the *semen immortalitatis*. Molkenboer writes line ‘1573’, but it should be 1583.

1589-93. As I note above, the Sun of Sacrifice (*d’Offerzon*) here is Christ. The imagery of the ‘harvest of skulls, bones and ribs’ is drawn from Ezekiel 37:1-8, but the passage alludes to the resurrection of the bodies described in I Corinthians 15:42 ff.

1592. The four elements.

1594. *aemen*[] is variant of *ademen* ‘to breathe.’

1594-5. A further reference to the resurrection of the bodies. Molkenboer notes that the resurrected bodies will be as clear as crystal, though it is unclear, as it were, where this view emerges from, as it is not stated in the biblical passage of I Corinthians 15. ‘He’ refers to the ‘Sun of Sacrifice’ i.e Christ.

1595ff. Here, Vondel writes that Christ will distinguish between the (honey) bees (1596) and the spiders (1599) at the end of time. The bees are those who share in the Eucharist in good faith. In lines 687ff., Vondel likens those who share in the sacrament to bees taking food from flowers. The spiders by contrast are Vondel’s and thus the Catholic Church’s opponents, and for him, they only draw poison for the flower of the Eucharist. In line 1600, I suggest that Vondel is playing on the word ‘word’ (*woort*), and may be taking the Calvinists in particular to task (or ‘having a dig at them’) for their emphasis on ‘the word,’ in particular as expressed in lengthy sermons.

1601. References to the (white) host of the Eucharist.

1602. Van Delft declares that ‘my Bee’ (*mijn By*) refers to the soul (*geest*) of the speaker, John the Evangelist. Hence ‘the flowering Gospel’ (*’t bloeiende Euangeli*) refers to John’s Gospel.²⁵⁹

1603. *Onversterfbaar*, translated as ‘enduring,’ is a word coined by Vondel.

1604. ‘All of Christ’s centuries’ (*al Kristus eeuwen*) refers to the Christian era.

1605. The continents are numbered as four, either because Australia had not yet been discovered by Europeans and the Americas would be treated as one continent, or Vondel is referring to the four points of the compass.

1608. The Eucharist is referred to as ‘soul medicine’ (*zielartsnye*) as also in line 1107 above.

²⁵⁹ See note to ll. 642ff. above for bibliographic references.

The reason why Christ feeds you with his own body and we ought to rest in the obedience of this faith (1609-1630)

Commentary

Picking up on the theme of the sacrament as a medicine for the soul in 1608, Vondel describes the benefits of sharing in the Eucharist. The sacrament is effective is beyond human reason (1616-18), but it is up to man to be faithful to the Christ and from faith follows obedience. Vondel then makes a jump to the Church, saying that as Christ has commanded that we listen to the Church (the Bride, 1626), we should be obedient to it. Here, we need to read in that Vondel means the Catholic Church, and so if we are obedient to it, we shall consequently share in Holy Communion.

Notes

1611. ‘The High Priest’ (*d’Aertspriester*) refers to Christ, who offers his flesh in the consecrated sacrament.

1612. This line seems to suggest that, here at least, Vondel believes that what the faithful share in when they take communion is of the same order as the flesh of from what they are made. This may be a mere rhetorical flourish, though he re-iterates the point in 1613, and it seems to go against the understanding of the nature of the consecrated elements that Vondel evinces elsewhere. Molkenboer is silent on this. I discuss the matter further in lines 837-8.

1615-16. Wisdom here refers to God. It is not clear whether Vondel is referring here to any particular one of the persons of the Trinity, in contrast to, for example, line 414 above, where he is clearly referring to Christ.²⁶⁰ In the present lines, Vondel asks a rhetorical question about who doubts the means by which humanity is restored by participating in the Eucharist. The means were discovered or brought about by God and it goes beyond the capabilities of human reason to understand those means.

1619. Cf. II Corinthians 10:5.

1623-4. Vondel is saying here that faith in God leads to obedience to him.

1626. ‘His Bride’ (*zijn Bruit*) refers to the Church, a reference drawn from Revelation 19:7.

1628. Cf. I Corinthians 3:11.

1629. Cf. John 15:26.

1630. Cf. I Timothy 3:15.

²⁶⁰ Alister McGrath notes that certainly in the Old Testament, Wisdom was a personification of God which bespoke God’s activity in Creation. It is to be contrasted, he tells us, with the Word of God, which goes forth into the world, and is much closer to that aspect of God which we associate with God incarnate, Jesus Christ, in the New Testament. Vondel though may not feel bound by such distinctions. See McGrath, *op. cit.*, 320-1.

...like the first Christians, also abused and cursed for this (1631-1646)

Commentary

Here, continuing the reference to the Church from the previous section, Vondel returns to the first Christians and the origins of the Church and says that they were abused and accused of various crimes, associated with their practices, such as cannibalism, which points to a misunderstanding of the Eucharistic sharing in the body and blood of Christ. However, he goes on, the early church stood firm and God's promise to his people, to sustain them with the body and blood of Christ, has continued to be fulfilled. Although there is no explicit evidence for this, I wonder whether Vondel may in some sense be alluding to the position of the Catholic Church in the United Provinces in the seventeenth century. Officially, Catholicism was banned in each province and Catholic worship was banned. That said, one survey counted thirty Catholic priests in Amsterdam alone in 1629, and in 1635, the city was estimated to have 14,000 Catholics amongst its total population of just over one hundred thousand. So, Catholics, including Vondel from around 1639, made up a sizable minority of the city's population, but were clearly restricted in their ability to practice their faith.²⁶¹

Notes

1631. 'The altars have been changed' refers to the sacrifice of the New Testament, i.e. the Eucharist, replacing the sacrifices of the Jews in the Old Testament.

1634-5. These were some of the accusations leveled by non-Christians against the Eucharist.

1635. Molkenboer suggests this refers to the catacombs, though there is no firm evidence that the Christian worship took place in the early Christian underground burial sites.²⁶² This may indeed be what Vondel had in mind, but we could read the line more generally as a reference to the fact that early Christians would have to meet secretly to worship.

1640. Cf. Matthew 4:4.

1641. 'This word' (*dit woort*) refers to the words of institution (Matthew 26:26).

1645. Cf. John 6:63.

St. John's conclusion (1647-1666)

Commentary

John the Evangelist, who has been speaking since line 895 draws his address to a close here by rejecting other accounts of the Eucharist (1647-49) and exhorting the poet to continue to share in the Eucharist. He will need to overcome sin and temptation (1660-2), but the prize will be great for he will one day be able to share in the 'hidden Manna' of heaven in the presence of God (1665-6).

²⁶¹ For a good introduction to the plight of Catholicism in the early seventeenth century United Provinces, and for the numbers quoted above, see Jonathan Israel, *The Dutch Republic: Its Rise, Greatness, and Fall* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 376 ff.

²⁶² See for example Joby (2007), *op. cit.*, 25.

Notes

1647. Berengar (*Berengaer*) of Tours, Archdeacon of Angers (d. 1088), was a central figure in debates on the Eucharist in the eleventh century. Although he did hold that a real and true change takes place in the Eucharistic elements, he argued that the change is a spiritual one and that the bread and wine remain of the same substance. It was as a result of the debates that he had with other theologians such as Lanfranc, that the term *transubstantiatio* emerged. He was thus seen, by Bellarmine amongst others,²⁶³ as an opponent of this doctrine and as a precursor to John Calvin and his Eucharistic theology. However, in his own writings, Calvin does not ally himself closely with Berengar, but rather when he does make reference to him, it is to defend himself against those, such as the Lutheran Joachim Westphal, who accused him ‘of reviving the heresy of Berengar[]’²⁶⁴ and to reject the crude realism of the Eucharistic doctrine that Berengar was forced to affirm when Pope Nicholas forced him to recant his original views on the Eucharist.²⁶⁵ Finally, reference to Capernaum is a clear allusion to Geneva, where Calvin spent most of his ministry (cf. 535, 838 and 1355ff.).

1648. Cf. John 6:52.

1649. Molkenboer gives a reference of Psalm 94:9 for the Vulgate. However, this makes no mention of a rod that God uses to smash his opponents. A more appropriate reference is Psalm 2:9.²⁶⁶

1650. This is a personal address by John to the poet.

1651-2. The (dear) pledge of salvation alludes to the *pignus futurae gloriae* (pledge of future glory) of the Liturgy. Cf. 1565-6.

1653. Vondel uses the language of fine art here as elsewhere, e.g. lines 85, 473-7 and 970. ‘This’ (*Dat*) refers to the dear pledge (of salvation) i.e. the Eucharist in 1651, as does ‘it’ (*’t*) in 1655, 1656 and 1659.

1656-6. ‘The glory of the Angels’ (*den troon der Engelen*) recalls the *hemeltrouwen* of line 1314.

1660-2. References to ‘her’ (*haer*) refer to the soul being feminine in grammatical gender in Dutch.

1663. The viaticum (*reiskost*) is usually applied to the sacrament given to those near or in danger of death to take with them on their journey to heaven.

²⁶³ Bellarmine, *op. cit.*, 388 B.

²⁶⁴ See Calvin’s ‘Second Defence of the Pious and Orthodox Faith Concerning the Sacraments in Answer to the Calumnies of Joachim Westphal,’ published in 1556. This is reproduced in: John Calvin, *Treatises on the Sacraments*, trans. Henry Beveridge (Fearn Ross-shire: Christian Heritage, 2002), 245-345, at 260.

²⁶⁵ Institutes, IV, xvii, 12.

²⁶⁶ Constantijn Huygens makes a similar reference to the rod as the instrument of divine punishment in a poem in the Lord’s Supper he wrote in Latin in 1643. He uses the same words, *virga ferrea*, as the Vulgate, Psalm 2:9. Joby (2008), *op. cit.*, Poem 2, 42-3, ll. 36-37.

1665. The phrase ‘hidden Manna’ (*manna absconditum*) draws on Revelation 2:17 (cf. line 748 above).

1666. Cf. I Corinthians 13:12, where Paul says we shall see God ‘face to face.’

And the Poet's (1667-1670)

Commentary

John finishes speaking in line 1666, having started his address to the poet in line 895. Vondel now sees John depart and at the end of this, the first day of his reflections on The Mysteries of the Altar, he spends the night reflecting on what he has learnt, before embarking on Book II of the poem on the following day.

Notes

1687. Traditionally, the eagle (*d'arent*) is the symbol of John. He arrives on it in line 395, though there Vondel uses another Dutch word, *adelaer*.

1670. Molkenboer draws a comparison between the final lines of this book and those of Vondel's earlier poem, *Lofzangh vande Christelycke Ridder*:

*De Ridder triumpheerde, als 't ruysschen vande boomen // Myn zoete rust
versteurde, ick overley de droomen // Daer 't hert mee' was belast: 's drooms
beeld, dacht ick, gewis // De waerheyd niet altyd heel ongelyck en is.*²⁶⁷

²⁶⁷ See Vondel, *De Werken, Deel I*, 458, ll. 281-4.