

EDITORIAL

This special edition of *In Writing* contains only the text of our recent Evangelical Library Lecture. The printed form of the lecture contains material that it was not possible to include on the might owing to time constraints. We are sure that this excellent piece of work will receive a ready and appreciative audience. We would like to warmly thank Monsieur Berthoud for his work in preparing and giving this lecture. Let me also express my appreciation to Mr Peter Glover here for his efforts in making available another edition of *In Writing*.

Because of the lecture's size we have decided to publish it alone. We hope to bring you a more regular edition of *In Writing* in the near future.

Meanwhile we are thankful to God for many answers to prayer in the work of *the Library* and although there is a long way to go we feel that at least some progress has been made over this last year. We do urge you to continue to pray for God's blessing on this work.

Gary Brady

THE EVANGELICAL LIBRARY ANNUAL LECTURE 2004



HEINRICH BULLINGER (1504-1575) AND THE REFORMATION *A Comprehensive Faith*

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Preamble

It is my great privilege and honour to dedicate this lecture to the memory of my great friend, the Rev. John Marshall who died on the August 29th last year and without whose kind intervention I should no doubt not be standing here before you this evening.

I remember very vividly a striking moment in one of our first very animated conversations as he was driving me up to Heathrow to catch my plane back to Switzerland. I was protesting at the lack of manly Christian leadership in the Church today. 'We have many followers of the Lamb of God' I exclaimed, 'But where are those godly imitators of the Lion of Judah?' Of course at that time I little realised that, if my good friend by his kind and gentle spirit, ever encouraging and comforting his brethren, was

indeed a model of the former; by his indomitable courage and fiery spirit he was also an extraordinary example of the latter. Such an alliance of manly vigour and generous love I have hardly known elsewhere. May the Lord Jesus Christ be praised for such men, such comprehensive imitators of Jesus Christ our divine image! May our Heavenly Father by the grace of his Holy Spirit raise up many such warm and manly servants in His Church, this for the advancement of His Kingdom, the edification of His Church and the comfort of His saints.

Introduction

I have been asked to speak to you of a figure in the history of the Reformation well nigh forgotten today, this even in his native Zurich, a great man of God, the 500th anniversary of whose birth we shall be celebrating this year. But in his time, that of the second generation of the leaders of the 16th Century Reformation of the Church, he was universally acclaimed as a figure of the first rank, both spiritually, ecclesiastically and politically. I refer here, of course, to the successor to Zwingli in Zurich, Heinrich Bullinger (July 18, 1504 – September 17, 1575). For 44 years he was the *Antistes* (that is first pastor and doctor) of the Church of the Canton of Zurich, from the death of Zwingli on the battlefield of Kappel in 1531 to his own departure from this vale of tears in 1575. Born five years before John Calvin, he outlived him by 11 years. Like his younger colleague in Geneva, Bullinger in Zurich left the profound mark of his indefatigable labours for the advance of God's Kingdom, not only on the ecclesiastical and public scene of his age, but on the Reformed heritage that, by God's grace, is ours today. Like Calvin also, but strange to say much more even than the Genevan Reformer from Picardy, Bullinger, by his immense theological and diplomatic correspondence, exercised an extraordinary influence not only on his native Swiss Confederation, but over all the German lands, in Eastern Europe, in France and the Netherlands, in Italy and Spain, and finally, most striking for us today, over the spiritual and political destinies of this precious isle set in a shining sea, Great Britain.

Let the figures speak for themselves. Calvin's correspondence extending throughout Europe, epistolary exchanges that played such a decisive role in the spread of the revived evangelical faith, comprises some 4,300 extant letters. The Bullinger correspondence, available in the Zurich archives, numbers over 12,000 letters. His published works, not including those edited after his death and translations, number 119 volumes.

As a very young man (in his early twenties) he became Zwingli's trusted companion and his indisputable successor but was later to gain the

friendship of Calvin and, as is abundantly witnessed by their correspondence, became at times something of a spiritual mentor, encouraging, consoling, pacifying and moderating his younger colleague in the ministry of God's Word. It was almost a paternal friendship in which Bullinger manifested his consummate gifts for pastoral care. Five times Calvin made the trip to Zurich, the spiritual bastion from which Bullinger rarely removed himself.

Let us mention some of his most striking literary productions. *The Second Helvetic Confession*¹ from his pen alone and written in the years 1561-1566 was the most widely accepted of all the 16th Century Reformed Confessions, from Hungary to Scotland, from France to the German Protestant States, from Poland and Transylvania to the Netherlands. His *Decades* (1549-1551), *Hausbuch* in German, was a collection of 50 sermons covering all the topics of 16th Century Reformed doctrine and addressed in Latin to the *Prophezei* meetings of the pastors and teachers of the Zurich Church for mutual edification and instruction. This was no doubt the major source of Bullinger's influence, at least until the Synod of Dort. It was translated into German, Dutch, French and English (1577). It was then made obligatory reading for the clergy under the authority of the Archbishop of Canterbury and by this means exercised a determining influence over the theology and practice of the whole Anglican Reformed tradition, this particularly amongst the English Puritans, later spreading Bullinger's influence into the New England colonies.

This is how J. Wayne Baker illustrates an aspect of Bullinger's massive influence on the religious, political and cultural life of his times:

Bullinger's influence was partly due to the many evangelical exiles, especially those from England and Italy, who went to Zurich. Mostly, however, this influence resulted from his voluminous writings and correspondence. ... His extant correspondence ... [contains] letters to and from nearly every prominent ecclesiastical and political leader of his

¹ This, together with his, *A Brief Exposition of the One and Eternal Testament and Covenant of God*, Eds. Charles S. McCoy, J. Wayne Baker, Wipf and Stock, 1999 (1991), is the only text of Bullinger's huge *corpus* recently republished in English, this in two different editions: *The Second Helvetic Confession* (1566) in John H. Leith (Ed.), *Creeeds of the Churches*, John Knox Press, Atlanta, 1977, pp 131-192 and *The Second Helvetic Confession of 1566* in Arthur C. Cochrane (Ed.) *Reformed Confessions of the 16th Century*, The Westminster Press, Philadelphia, 1966, pp 224-301. An excellent new French translation has been recently published: *La Seconde Confession Helvétique*, Éditions Kerygma, Aix-en-Provence, 2001, 124 pp.

day. His works have been traced to almost every part of Europe, including Poland, Hungary, Romania, Italy and Spain, and his books crossed the seas with the Dutch and English colonists.²

The question we now raise, but which we shall not answer, is that of the almost complete disappearance of even the name of Bullinger from the memory of our contemporary German Swiss fellow citizens. Apparently none of his works (except for an ongoing publication of his correspondence) are at present available in current German editions.³ Nothing by Bullinger, with the exception of the *Second Helvetic Confession*, is available in current French or English editions. There seems to be no project for the republication of any of his works. Now this situation is somewhat paradoxical, when compared with that of his younger colleague, Calvin. For Calvin is universally recognised as a major figure of the Reformation and his works abundantly re-issued in many languages but his great contemporary is all but forgotten, unpublished, unread.

But such was not the perspective of his contemporaries. Let me here briefly quote from the *Second Series of the Zurich Letters (1558-1602)* brought out in the 19th Century by the Parker Society. It is from a letter written on June 16th 1563 by Edmund Grindal (then Bishop of London) to Calvin:

I grieve from my heart that at your age [54!], and with so slender a frame, you have been attacked, as Gallasius informs me, with a fit of the gout. I have no doubt but that you have contracted this disorder by excessive study and exertion. Henceforth therefore, you must relax somewhat of your former labours and unseasonable lucubrations, lest, by not sparing yourself, you greatly increase your disease, and become of less benefit to the church. Think of Nazianzen, who, because he did not, when advanced in years, relax at all from that austerity which he practised in early life, was almost constantly obliged to keep his bed, and on that account was rendered less useful to the church. As you and

² J. Wayne Baker, *Heinrich Bullinger and the Covenant: The Other Reformed Tradition*, Ohio University Press, Athens, Ohio, 1980, p. xi.

³ Andreas Alder, a German Swiss pastor of Reformed convictions – a rare bird indeed – exercising his ministry in Hundwil, Appenzell, recently wrote me as follows ‘And what of Bullinger ...? Unknown, reply our German Swiss pastors. And Bultmann then? Absolutely indispensable. All the world is necessary, but don’t speak to us of Bullinger! Specially him! Everyone has right of speech, those who have nothing to say and those whose pronouncements will disappear tomorrow. But the masters of the Swiss German Reformation have no rights at all.’

Bullinger are almost the only chief pillars remaining, we desire to enjoy you both (if it please God) as long as possible.⁴

But a few months later God saw fit to remove from the scene of his great labours, that pillar of the Church, John Calvin. At this great loss, that other great pillar of the 16th Century Reformed Churches, Bullinger (who himself had in spring 1564 sustained the loss from the plague both of his wife and several children, himself miraculously surviving the pestilential infection), wrote on June 19th 1564 to Théodore de Bèze of the death of his great friend, Calvin, which had occurred on May 27th.

I cannot express what pain I experienced when I learnt that Calvin, that esteemed brother, had been taken from us. I fear that God, in his anger, has determined for us a horrible trial. In three or four years Phillip [Melancthon], Martyr [Peter Martyr Vermigli, his intimate friend], Musculus, Hyperius, Calvin have been removed, all very great men, through whom God has surpassed himself in granting us many and eminent gifts. In no way do I contest their rest and deliverance from this hideous world; they now enjoy a heavenly purity. With all my heart I desire that the Lord Christ, if so he willed, would soon unite me to them⁵

And a month before Calvin's death Bullinger wrote to his friend Fabritius, at Chur in the Graubunden,

Thus we are deprived of some of the most valorous men. Forgive me. I do not have the heart to write more.⁶

⁴ *The Zurich Letters (Second Series) Comprising the Correspondence of several English Bishops and others with some of the Helvetian Reformers, during the Reign of Queen Elizabeth*, The Parker Society, Cambridge, The University Press, 1845, pp 96, 97.

⁵ André Bouvier, *Henri Bullinger le successeur de Zwingli d'après sa correspondance avec les réformés et les humanistes de langue française*, Neuchâtel, Delachaux et Niestlé, 1940, pp 178, 179. This is an excellent account of Bullinger's life by the only French-speaking specialist on Bullinger.

The only major biography in German is Carl Pestalozzi: *Heinrich Bullinger, Leben und aus gewählte Schriften*, Friederichs, Elberfeld, 1858. See the more recent, Fritz Blanke, *Der Junge Bullinger*, Zwingli Verlag, Zurich, 1942. Two new studies are announced for the 500th anniversary: Emilio Campi, *Heinrich Bullinger und sein Zeit* and Fritz Büsser, *Heinrich Bullinger*, both TVZ Theologischer Verlag, 2004.

⁶ André Bouvier, *Un père de l'Église réformée Henri Bullinger le second Réformateur de Zurich*, Genève, 1987, p. 94.

1. Heinrich Bullinger (1504-1575) a brief life

Let us now briefly attempt to restore the memory of the life and labours of this great man of God. We shall follow his development until 1531 in some detail and pass rapidly over his years as *Antistes* of the Church of Zurich. This latter part of Bullinger's long ministry will be treated in more detail.

Bullinger was born July 18th 1504 in the little town of Bremgarten, at present in the Canton of Aargau, but then under the joint administration of different Confederate States who would successively exercise their right of rule over this region, newly assimilated into the developing boundaries of the Swiss Confederation. Heinrich was the fifth and youngest son of a Roman Catholic priest by the same name, Dean of the chapter of Bremgarten and of Anna Wiederkehr, daughter of a well-to-do local miller. Such a situation of conjugal illegitimacy was quite common at a time when the Roman novelty of obligatory clerical celibacy had not yet become the accepted custom in many parts of the Southern German lands. Bullinger's parents' irregular situation – something like a common law marriage formalised by the payment of a nominal fine to the Bishop of Constance – led the five boys to be brought up with the benefits of the Godly heritage flowing from a pious clerical household. His father, hospitable and fond of hunting, had inherited some wealth and was of a generous temperament, the family enjoying the social advantages of an open table. This hospitality and generosity was to characterise the behaviour of the future *Antistes*. But we must here add a theological note: this stable, but legally illegitimate family situation, helps us better understand Bullinger's sure grasp of the real continuity of the local Christian tradition he had inherited and claimed for his own. Contrary to Calvin, who was constrained by the brutal circumstances of dire persecution to a total rupture with the erroneous Roman system, Bullinger could see, from the unusual circumstances of his upbringing, traces of an older Orthodox order that had not yet been completely eradicated by the heretical innovations – here obligatory clerical celibacy – of apostate Rome. It is not surprising that Bullinger would later entitle a treatise published by him in 1541, *Der Alte Gloub (Antiquissima Fides et vera Religio)*, 'The Old Faith'. It was subtitled 'The old faith, an evident probation out of the Holy Scripture that the Christian faith (which

is the right, true and undoubted faith) hath endured since the beginning of the world'.⁷

In his 'Prologue to the reader' Coverdale writes:

This is then no new-fangled faith, no strange faith, no faith invented by man's brain; but even the same that God's Holy Spirit teacheth in the infallible truth of his Scripture, and that Adam, Abel, Enoch and all the other servants of God were saved in.⁸

This sense of historical continuity was to be one of the fundamental marks of Bullinger's ministry. Of this, more later.

Bullinger's early education began precociously – when he was not yet five – in the Latin school of Bremgarten. Aged 12, on June 11th 1516, his father sent his young son to join his elder brother at the famous school of Emmerich in the Duchy of Cleves, on the northern borders of the Netherlands. Here he received a very thorough classical and humanist education. Having profited from the rigorous discipline of this establishment, Bullinger set foot, aged 15, in the famous traditionalist University of Cologne, which in the past had seen such masters of learning as Albert the Great, Thomas Aquinas and Duns Scotus and later welcomed the more mystical tradition of Meister Eckhart and Johan Tauler. On September 12th 1519 he enrolled in the Arts Faculty with the explicit aim of preparing himself to become a Carthusian monk. A year later, in November 1520, he obtained his BA. The University of Cologne, unlike more recent academic institutions such as Basle University, was still strongly under the influence of the scholastic discipline of Albert and Thomas, but some of the professors had begun to adopt the new classical methods of the humanists, with their insistence on a return to the original sources of learning, *ad fontes*.

This influence led Bullinger to the discovery of the Fathers and, in particular, to an attentive reading of Chrysostom's *Sermons on Matthew*, which showed him how different their thinking was to that of the scholastic method of such academic models as Lombard or Gratian. He pursued his exploration of the Fathers with the discovery of Ambrose, Augustine and Jerome. All this, burning the midnight oil, was in addition to his official studies completed in record time. It was thus in 1521 (aged 17) that he bought his first New Testament, reading first Matthew's Gospel with the help of Jerome's Commentary. This discovery of the very text of the

⁷ Heinrich Bullinger, *The Old Faith* (1547), in *Writings and Translations of Myles Coverdale*, The Parker Society, Cambridge, The University Press, 1844, p. 2.

⁸ *Ibid*, p. 6.

Gospel was for him truly a revelation. At this date he writes in his *Journal* ‘It was then that I finally abandoned the project of becoming a Carthusian monk and became utterly convinced of all the horror of papistic doctrine.’⁹

But it was eventually through the reading of Melancthon’s *Loci Communes*, which had just come off the press in December 1521 that Bullinger came in a definite and irrevocable manner to adhere to the teachings of the truly evangelical faith. It was during the years 1521, 1522 (Bullinger was but 18) that he immersed himself night and day in impassioned meditation on Scripture and the writings of the Fathers of the Church. It was at this time, as he wrote in his *Journal*, that: ‘I discovered that salvation came from God through Christ.’¹⁰

Much later, in 1545, reflecting on his gradual and irresistible discovery of the truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ, he wrote in his second reply to Cochlaeus:

Without a doubt, I can boast of nothing. I am a sinner, but I have put my only hope in Christ. ... Already as a young man I came to the true faith; already, at that time, I immersed myself in the study of Scripture and of the Fathers. I have never been bound by vows to anyone, whether Bishop, Abbot or Prior. I have pronounced no monastic vows. I lived at that time as a layman and private person, giving my time to the study of science and zealous for the study of letters and seeking to attain the

⁹ Bouvier, op. cit. (1987), pp 17, 18.

¹⁰ Bouvier, op. cit. (1941), p. 18.

Bouvier (1941) quotes at some length from Bullinger’s *Journal* for 1522, ‘The first of the writings of the Fathers which came into my hands were the Homilies of Chrysostom on Matthew, and, after having carefully studied them, I was convinced that the Ancients treated sacred matters in a way that differed from that of Lombard and Gratian. I also consulted various works by Ambrose also, and by Origen and Augustine. In between I examined a number of Luther’s writings, such as ‘The Captivity of Babylon’, ‘On Christian freedom’, ‘On Justification’, his theses of Good Works and so on. I noted that Luther was closer to the theology of the Ancients than were the scholastics. I also noted that, as the Scholastics lent on the authority of the Fathers, these, on the other hand, based their arguments exclusively on the authority of the Two Testaments. That was the reason why I acquired a New Testament. I read the Gospel according to Matthew and the Commentary of St Jerome. I persevered in my reading of the New Testament and having finished forthwith abandoned the design I had up till then entertained of becoming a Carthusian monk and began to consider with absolute horror Papistic doctrine. It is then that I fell on the ‘Loci Communes’ of Melancthon. They were my delight. Finally, I gave up the essential of my time, this day and night, to the study of the Holy Scriptures, this throughout the years 1521 and 1522.’ See p. 10.

knowledge that comes from holy wisdom. Enquire if you will. Praise God, you will find nothing for which I should blush, except that I confess to be a sinful man in the presence of God, my Lord.¹¹

After six years absence, Bullinger returned home to Bremgarten with an MA from the prestigious Cologne University. Far more decisive was the fact of his conversion to the gospel. On January 17th 1523 the Abbot of the Cistercian Monastery of the small town of Kappel (at that time under the

administration of the city of Zurich) offered this brilliant young man (not yet 19!) the post of Director of the local monastic school. But Bullinger's evangelical convictions were already clear and his character sufficiently determined for him to set his own conditions. He declared that he had no intention of becoming either a monk or a priest (a condition that had always accompanied the function of Director) and asked to be free not to attend the Mass. In addition to his formal teaching he began to give lectures, open to the general public, on theological matters, basing them on the *Loci Communes* of Melancthon. He also began a series of biblical lectures where he commented on the Scriptures. In six years of activity in Kappel he systematically went through 21 of the 27 New Testament books. This biblical teaching had a profound influence, not only on the religious life of the monastery but also on that of the townspeople in general, to the anger of the staunch traditional believers in the Canton of Zug but a few miles away. More and more citizens turned in repentance to the gospel and embraced the renewed teaching of 'The Old Faith'.

It was during this period that a great bond of friendship and mutual trust developed between Bullinger and Zwingli. This was despite their difference in age (Zwingli was 20 years older) and character. Bullinger was as determined, prudent, self-controlled and peaceable, as Zwingli was brilliant, impulsive, impetuous and at times violent. In 1527 Bullinger spent a prolonged leave at the theological school set up in Zurich in order to perfect his Hebrew at the feet of the great scholar, Pellican. In June of the next year he was called by the Zurich Synod to exercise the ministry of preacher and pastor in Kappel. He later became the pastor of his native town Bremgarten, where he not only replaced his father but also had the great joy and privilege of witnessing the conversion of his elderly parents and the legitimising of their marriage!

During the years preceding the fateful battle of Kappel, the growth of the Reformation within the territories of the Swiss Confederation seemed to

¹¹ Bouvier, (1987), p. 18.

know no bounds.¹² Zwingli was convinced that this spiritual impetus would become irresistible and even came to consider that the use of force was legitimate as a means of imposing the Reformation on the recalcitrant confederate cantons of Central Switzerland. This is not the place to describe the events leading to the disastrous defeat of the forces of Zurich at Kappel, October 11th 1531. Let us but note that the Confederation consisted of an alliance of 13 small and larger independent cantons. The past aggressive history of Zurich, together with Zwingli's overweening and unrealistic ambitions in favour of a new Confederation, (that of all the Protestant states of the Southern German speaking lands), led to a cumulative opposition to Zurich's 1531 campaign to impose the Reformed faith by force on the Central Swiss cantons totally opposed to what they considered the new heresies. The decisive political element lay in Berne's fundamental opposition to the danger she perceived in Zurich's ambitions and her desire to concentrate her energies on her own expansionist ambitions to the southwest, in the direction of the French speaking lands of Vaud and Savoy. It is this traditional Bernese policy that eventually led to the establishment of the Reformation in Vaud, Neuchâtel and Geneva and to Calvin's settling in that city, this with incalculable consequences for the ultimate development of the Reformed faith throughout the world.

With the catastrophic defeat of the Zurich army by the abler military forces of the Central Swiss cantons, strengthened by their maintenance of the mercenary service (that Zwingli had laboured so hard to eliminate in

¹² For the history of the Swiss Reformation the major work (a study which has completely renewed our understanding of the period) is Bruce Gordon, *The Swiss Reformation*, Manchester University Press, Manchester, 2002. Bruce Gordon had previously published a brief description of the early Swiss Reformation entitled 'Switzerland' in Andrew Pettegree, *The Early Reformation in Europe*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1992, pp 70-93. See also Thomas A. Brady, *Turning Swiss. Cities and Empire 1450-1550*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1985. On Zwingli cf J. V. Pollet, *Huldrych Zwingli et le Zwinglianisme*, Vrin, Paris, 1988; Ulrich Gäbler, *Huldrych Zwingli. His Life and Work*, T. & T. Clark, Edinburgh, 1987 [1983]; G. R. Potter, *Zwingli*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1976; Robert C. Walton, *Zwingli's Theocracy*, University of Toronto Press, Toronto, 1967; W. P. Stephens, *The Theology of Huldrych Zwingli*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1986; W. P. Stephens, *Zwingli. An Introduction to His Thought*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1994. See also J. H. Merle d'Aubigné, *For God and His People. Ulrich Zwingli and the Swiss Reformation*, BJU Press, Greenville SC, 2000.

Zurich)¹³ Zurich's growing influence and, with it, that of the Reformation in Eastern Switzerland came to a brutal halt. Only the Confederate structure of the nation and the abstention from conflict by Berne, giving it to some degree a position as arbitrator, prevented the total destruction of the Reformation itself in Zurich and in the mandated territories under its influence. Zwingli was himself killed in the battle. His corpse, propped against a tree, was subjected to a mock trial, quartered as traitor and the fragmented pieces burnt as the remains of an obdurate heretic. Zurich was left in a defenceless position, without an army to protect itself and its leadership decapitated.

Bullinger and his family had to flee for their lives, leaving Bremgarten forever as it reverted to the Roman faith. At the end of November 1531 they took refuge in Zurich. It was at this fateful juncture that Bullinger, then 27, received a call from the three major Reformed Churches in the Confederation: from Basle, where Oecolampadius had just died; from Berne, which was seeking to renew its leadership; and finally from the decapitated Zurich Church. The utter defeat of the aggressive Reformation party in Zurich had led to the beginnings of revolt on the part of the rural population in the still largely Roman Catholic Zurich countryside. This led to the formulation by the party of what were called 'The Meilen Articles' where, among other economic and political demands, the Zurich authorities were summoned to put a brake on the politicised preaching that had characterised the Church leadership under Zwingli. What was in fact demanded was a systematic dissociation of politics and the Christian faith. But the real and capital question at issue was that of the unfettered freedom to preach the Word. After the defeat of Kappel, were the Zurich preachers to retreat into a kind of pietistic Christianity, or were they to remain free to preach the whole counsel of God, the gospel of free grace and its comprehensive application to every aspect of the life of the Christian? The fourth of the Meilen Articles (formulated November 28th 1531) reads:

Gracious lords, it is our friendly entreaty and desire that preachers no longer be accepted in our city save those who are peaceable and generally orientated towards peace and quiet. We further wish that those provocative ministers who publicly are wicked from the pulpit be sent away by you and by us together, who wish only peace and quiet.

¹³ See, Olivier Bangerter, *La pensée militaire de Zwingli*, Peter Lang, Berne, 2003 and John McCormack, *One Million Mercenaries: Swiss Soldiers in the Armies of the World*, Lee Cooper, London, 1993.

Eventually, let the preachers in the countryside say only that which is God's Word expressed in both Testaments. Let the clergy, as already notified, not undertake or meddle in any secular matters either in the city or the countryside, in the council or elsewhere, which they should rather allow you, our lords, to manage.¹⁴

Zwingli had overstepped the boundaries distinguishing Church and State and his overweening political designs had led to national catastrophe. But the demands of the Fourth Meilen Article attacked the comprehensive character of Christian preaching as it was understood by the Swiss Reformers: the preaching of God's Word must be free to speak to every issue in both life and faith, and this of course implied the prophetic office of the minister with regard to society and to political authority. On December 9th 1531, aged 27, Bullinger was elected *Antistes* or chief minister of the Zurich Church. On account of the limitations the Fourth Meilen Article imposed on the freedom of the ministry, he asked for a delay before notifying the Zurich authorities of his acceptance. He would then give his reply, not in his own name alone, but as the unanimous expression of all the Zurich clergy, for he could not consider making such a decision apart from the fellowship of Zurich pastors. As Bruce Gordon ably shows, the restraints imposed on the free preaching of God's Word were totally unacceptable to the vision of the Swiss Reformers as to the sovereign authority of God's Word over every aspect of reality.

This article amounted to a direct attack [on] Zwingli's understanding of the preaching office. Bullinger, who had given his first sermon in the Grossmünster as a guest preacher on November 25th, replied that he could not accept the leadership of the Zurich church under such constraints. He saw the offer for what it was, a poisoned chalice. On the 13th December, four days after he was appointed chief minister in the Grossmünster, Bullinger made his first representation before the council concerning the freedom of the preacher. He argued for biblical authority of ministers preaching on political themes, and that the Zurich ministers in preaching the unbound Word of God were upholding the tradition passed from the prophets of the Old Testament through the apostles and the teachers of the Church.

He adds,

However, Bullinger himself was well aware of the dangers inherent in his reply, and he proposed to the council a *modus vivendi*, which took account of the concerns of both parties. In the petition to the council he

¹⁴ Bruce Gordon, op. cit., p. 139.

included a draft of an oath of office for the clergy, which made two important points. Firstly, the ministers agreed to the holding of biannual synods wherein political matters might be raised and discussed. This synod would in return, police the content of preaching in the pulpits of Zurich and her territories. Secondly, in return for submitting themselves to this disciplinary body, the ministers were to be allowed to preach the Word in the manner required of them as preachers.¹⁵

There is no doubt as to the character of the ‘fullness of the counsel of God’ that was for Bullinger the aim and purpose of the Church’s work and more particularly its ministers, in the general community. Here again Gordon expresses very clearly the comprehensive nature of the renewed biblical faith as it was proclaimed and applied by Bullinger through the preaching of the Word and the discipline of the Church as exercised by the Synod. I quote him again:

The purpose of the Reformation was to bring about a conversion (*bekehrung*) of the community. The Christian state must be governed in accordance with Scripture, with purity of morals, godly laws and institutions grounded in the Bible.¹⁶

For the accomplishment of this task the bi-annual synods were an essential instrument. The ordinances proposed by Bullinger and his colleagues – for so great was his respect for unity and the common mind of the Church that he would only act with the full agreement of his fellow ministers – were accepted by the Councils of Zurich and formed the basis of the relationship between the ecclesiastical and political authorities in the canton during the 44 years of Bullinger’s service as *Antistes* of the Zurich Church and for many decades after.

The rest of his career in Zurich can be considered as the outworking of these ecclesiastical principles. Unlike Calvin, a stranger in Geneva, who knew a long struggle, first with his colleagues, then with the members of the Church and finally, until 1555, with the councils of the city, Bullinger, a native of the region, gained the complete victory he required for the accomplishment of his ministry as *Antistes* at its very outset. His 44 years simply saw the orderly working out of the Reformation: in the work of the Synod; the formation of the ministers; the preaching of the Word creating, by the Spirit’s activity, its own order in Church, Society and State and in the extraordinary extension of the work of Reformation by his immense

¹⁵ Bruce Gordon, *Clerical Discipline and the Rural Reformation. The Synod in Zürich, 1532-1580*, Peter Lang, Berne, 1992, p. 80.

¹⁶ Bruce Gordon, *Ibid*, p. 81.

correspondence and indefatigable publications. Here we note, among many others, some major literary and spiritual landmarks: the publication of his *Decades*¹⁷ (his most comprehensive work of theology) 1549-1551; the agreement with Calvin on the Lord's Supper, the *Consensus Tigurinus* 1549¹⁸; the *Second Helvetic Confession* 1561-1566.¹⁹ He was an attentive and very responsible father, an excellent husband and his house the very example of Christian hospitality. When he died in 1575 he might well have, were it not for his great modesty, exclaimed with the Apostle Paul:

I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing. 2 Timothy 4:7, 8

His concern for the good of the churches, his fight for the preservation and promotion of *the Old Faith*, that restored to the Church by the godly work of the Reformation, was evident even as he saw his physical strength fade. Thus he wrote to Théodore de Bèze, June 16th 1575, concerning the dangers threatening the church in Germany:

Exhort our warriors to prefer peace to war, even a mediocre and unsatisfactory peace. I beg you not to yearn for war and the shedding of blood, and to consider what a new conflict would imply. ... Some seek vengeance and nothing else without thinking of putting into practise the Gospel and of saving the churches ... It is neither your duty nor mine to sound the trumpet, but rather to preach peace according to the charge we have received from the Lord.²⁰

On August 26th Bullinger convened the ministers and professors of the Academy to take his leave of them. André Bouvier summarises his parting words thus:

Bullinger declared to his assembled colleagues his attachment to Christian doctrine as it is found in the Apostle's Creed and in the

¹⁷ *The Decades of Henry Bullinger*, The Parker Society, Cambridge, The University Press, 1849-1852, Five Decades of Sermons in four volumes.

¹⁸ 'Mutual consent of the Churches of Zurich and of Geneva as to the Sacraments' in John Calvin, *Tracts and Treatises on the Doctrine and Worship of the Church* (Ed. Henry Beveridge), Vol II, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1958, pp 212-220. (Cf pp 200-243. 'Accord sur les sacrements' in *Calvin homme d'Église*, Labor, Genève, 1936, pp 143-191. Paul Rorem, *Calvin and Bullinger on the Lord's Supper*, Grove Liturgical Study, N° 12, Grove Books, Nottingham, 1989; Jean Cadier, *La doctrine Calviniste de la sainte cène*, Montpellier, 1951.

¹⁹ 'The Second Helvetic Confession' (1566) See footnote above.

²⁰ Bouvier, *Henri Bullinger*, op. cit., 1987, p. 122.

Helvetic Confession. He declared that he had forgiven his Lutheran opponents, defenders of the dogma of the ubiquity of Christ's body, error he had unceasingly opposed as contrary to Scripture. He exhorted the preachers to doctrinal faithfulness, but also to vigilance in prayer and in their moral conduct, abandoning all excess, in particular that of drinking, a vice all too common with the Germans. He exhorted them, by their sermons and by private exhortation, to labour at maintaining the Magistrates in their respectful attitude towards the Word of God. He closed these parting words by a fervent prayer of gratitude to God and by reciting some verses from the Latin poet Prudentius.

On the 2nd of August he drew up his will. In it he asked of the Magistrates to do all in their power to maintain the unity of the Confederation, to take good care to accomplish their duty of policing public *mores* and to be zealous in their application of public charity and of equity.²¹

He passed away quietly to a better Kingdom on September 17th 1575 murmuring the Lord's Prayer and verses from the Psalms. Thus came to a peaceful close a ministry greatly used of God for the development of His Kingdom, this to the greater glory of His Holy Name.

2. The relation between a faithful Church and Godly Magistrates

For Bullinger the separation of Church and State was in itself unthinkable. If the Church was to police itself through measures of self-discipline exercised in the biannual meetings of the Synod, at no time did he ever demand (as Calvin would later do in Geneva) that the public application of the most extreme measure related to this discipline – excommunication – be placed in the hands of a clerical authority and not in that of the magistrates. Bullinger believed that the godly magistrate – as had been the case with such God fearing Kings of Israel as David, Solomon (for a time), Asa and Josiah – had the duty to participate in the biblical direction of the Church. In this respect his thought reflected the practice of the first Christian Emperors: a Constantine, for example, who did not hesitate to make use of his Imperial authority to convene the Council of Nicea in 325. A later example is that of the Westminster Assembly of Divines convened at the behest of Parliament.

But if for Bullinger the final authority over the Church lay, in the last resort, in the hands of the temporal power, the prophetic function of the Church with regard to the whole of society, magistrates included, was

²¹ *Ibid*, pp 122, 123.

maintained by the preacher's office whereby the Word was freely and uncompromisingly proclaimed to all. In addition the ministers, through the person of the *Antistes* had direct and immediate access to the Councils of the Republic, authorities who – at least during Bullinger's 44 years – paid great attention to his Christian counsel on political matters. Whereas Calvin was, until his final victory in 1555, to face bitter opposition and conflict, Bullinger's relation to the Zurich Magistrates was from the start one of trust and co-operation. This harmony between the Godly Magistrate and the faithful Church was one of the essential elements to his vision of the truly comprehensive Christian Faith.²²

Let us here remove some unnecessary misunderstandings as to Bullinger's position on the relation of the Church to the State. As a defender of *Chalcedon* he refused any confusion between the spiritual and the temporal orders. The Magistrate was not to usurp the proper spiritual function of the Church: the preaching of the Word and the celebration of the sacraments. The Church, on the other hand, was not to pretend to any kind of rule over the Magistrate, as was the case with the Roman theocratic system. But one must add that the absence, for political and theological reasons, in the Zurich arrangement of 1531-1532 of that clear institutional distinction between Church and State, for which Calvin was later to fight so strenuously in Geneva, made the balance between the spiritual and temporal powers in Zurich unduly (and dangerously) dependent on the stature both of the Magistrates and of the Pastors. Once Bullinger was gone, and with him his great spiritual and political authority, the State would increasingly be tempted to dominate the Church. Nothing on the institutional level would then hinder this growing appetite for the usurped authority of the State in the spiritual sphere. This historical fact – that of the ulterior Erastian subordination of the Church to the State – may in part explain why Bullinger, the historical representative of the faithful Zurich Church, has today become so utterly unknown, even in his native canton. The institutionalisation by Calvin of a clear distinction between Church and

²² On the legacy of Bullinger's political thought see Andries Raath and Shaun de Freytas, *Theologico-Political Federalism: the Office of Magistracy and the Legacy of Heinrich Bullinger*, *Westminster Theological Journal*, Vol. 63, 2001, pp 285-304. On the contrast between Bullinger's and Calvin's relation to the Magistrate see, Jean Marc-Berthoud, *John Calvin & the Spread of the Gospel in France*. The Westminster Conference Papers 1992, p.1-53. See in French, Jean Marc-Berthoud, *Calvin et la France, Genève et le déploiement de la Réforme au XVI siècle*, L'Age d'Homme, Lausanne, 1999.

State was certainly more biblical (and less dangerous) than Bullinger's political accommodation and, in the long run, certainly more productive both spiritually and politically.

But it is best here to let Bullinger speak for himself. An important part of his *Decades* is given to a detailed exposition of the Ten Commandments. The sixth commandment – Thou shalt commit no murder – is separated into its two aspects: the interdiction of homicide and the description of the function of the Magistrate. In passing, it is interesting to point out that the duties of the Magistrate are usually dealt with under the fifth commandment, that ordering children to honour their parents. On this question of the biblical teaching on homicide and on civil authority, Bullinger devotes no less than four sermons in the first volume of the Parker Society edition of the *Decades*, some 95 pages in all. The titles of each of these sermons in the *Second Decade* merit attention.

- Sixth sermon: Of the second precept of the second table, which is in order the sixth of the ten commandments, thou shalt not kill and of the magistrate.
- Seventh sermon: Of the office of the magistrate, whether the care of religion appertain to him or no, and whether he may make laws and ordinances in cases of religion.
- Eighth sermon: Of judgement, and the office of the judge; that Christians are not forbidden to judge; of revengement and punishment; whether it be lawful for a magistrate to kill the guilty; wherefore, when, how, and what a magistrate must punish; whether he may punish offenders in religion or no.
- Ninth sermon: Of war; whether it be lawful for a magistrate to make war. What the Scripture teacheth touching war. Whether a Christian man may bear the office of a magistrate and of the duty of subjects.

He explains his position, and that of the Zurich Church, in no uncertain terms.

For I know that many are of the opinion that the things of religion and their ordering belong to the bishops alone and not to the kings, princes and other magistrates. But the catholic truth teaches that the things of

religion especially belong to the magistracy and that the same not only may but also should and ought to order and promote religion.²³

After quoting a number of examples from the Old Testament, he adds:

Who is ignorant, that the magistrate's especial care ought to be to keep the commonweal in safeguard and prosperity? Which undoubtedly he cannot do, unless he provide to have the word of God preached to his people, and cause them to be taught the true worship of God, by that means making himself, as it were, the minister of true religion.²⁴

Now the exaggeration of this teaching was to lead to what later was to be known as Erastianism and it is known, through Bullinger's unprinted correspondence with Thomas Erastus in the Palatinate, that the Zurich Reformer played an important role in the formulation of this position.²⁵ But in Bullinger's mind this by no means implied the subordination of the Church to the Magistrate. It was implicit in his view of the comprehensive character of the Christian faith that the totality of the Commonwealth was included in any truly biblical perception of reality. It is also to be noted that it was his recognition of the necessary and beneficent role of the godly magistrate in affairs of religion that so strongly favoured the great influence Bullinger exercised in the establishment of the Reformation in England, this of course in the context of the English Monarch as the Head of the Church.

For Bullinger, there existed a relation of mutual dependence between the faithful Church and the godly Magistrate. Pamela Biel comments on the need for the Magistrate to hear and heed the preaching of God's Word, when she writes of the 17th Sermon of the *Decades*.²⁶

Bullinger expends the remainder of the sermon on demonstrating that, as the discernment of right religion is a complicated process, the magistrates ought to seek help in the right ordering of the church. The ministers, as the expert interpreters of God's word and will, assisted the magistrates in keeping the territory on the path of right religion. The

²³ Pamela Biel, *Doorkeepers at the House of Righteousness. Henrich Bullinger and the Zurich Clergy 1535-1575*, Peter Lang, Berne, 1991, pp 19, 20. Henry Bullinger, *The Decades*, I-II (Vol. 1), pp 323, 324.

²⁴ Henry Bullinger, *The Decades*, I-II (Vol. 1), p. 324.

²⁵ Robert C. Walton, Heinrich Bullinger 1504-1575 in Jill Raitt (Ed.) *Shapers of the Religious Traditions in Germany, Switzerland and Poland, 1560-1600*, Yale University Press, New Haven, 1981, p. 87.

²⁶ That is the seventh sermon of the *Second Decade*.

magistrate, for his part, retained the exercise of power such that he still stood as an authority over the minister in all things save the interpretation of Scripture.²⁷

What was important for Bullinger – and here we again find his constant aim of attaining to a truly comprehensive faith – was not the exact definition of the particular rights and duties of Church and State as separate or even opposed institutions, but what Biel rightly calls ‘the reciprocal relationship between the minister and the magistrate’.²⁸ Is it necessary here to add that his *comprehensive* way of thinking about every aspect of reality – a logic of ‘both and’ - does not function in fields where error and sin are involved. There rules supreme the antithesis – ‘either or’ — the necessary choice between truth and error, good and evil. But Bullinger’s general strain of thought, strongly founded as it was on the original perfect coherence of the unfallen creation, viewed reality in terms of reciprocity, of the logic of ‘both and’, of coherence and complementarity. His words speak for themselves:

To the magistrate is commanded [by God] that he hear the servants of the Church. On the other hand, the servant of the church should follow the magistrate in all these things which the law commands. So the magistrate is not made subject by God to the priests or servants of the church as lords but as servants of the Lord God. Thus the servants of the church as much as the magistrates must be submissive to God in himself and his law. For if a single one of the priests does not speak the word of God, and he is priest only in name, no one of the common people should hold him before their eyes [as a model to follow]; I will be silent about a prince or a magistrate.²⁹

Elsewhere he explicitly affirms with the apostles that, faced with an iniquitous political power, the Christian must ‘Obey God rather than men’.

This priority given to the monarch in the work of the Reformation of the Church comes out very clearly in his 1538 dedication of his book *Concerning Sacred Scripture* to Henry VIII. There he exhorts the king to take in hand the liberation of what later became the Anglican Church from the errors of Rome. For Bullinger, as Biel puts it,

²⁷ Pamela Biel, *op. cit.* p. 20.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ Pamela Biel, *op. cit.*, pp 20, 21; Bullinger, *Decades*, I/II, p. 329.

Henry has the ultimate power and responsibility for the fate of the Church in his land. The potential for positive change in England through Henry dictates Bullinger's position.³⁰

Bullinger was aware that politics, the art of the possible – here the advancement of the Reformation in Britain – depended on the wise and prudent use of the historically established powers and institutions of the time. In the 16th Century, without the conversion of those in political authority, there was little hope for the free proclamation of the Word, a ministry without which no Reformation whatever was possible. Biel qualifies what we can call the Erastian tendency of Bullinger's thinking as follows:

Bullinger did not, however, believe that the king ought to be left to his own devices when it came to matters of religion. Most of *Concerning Sacred Scripture* argued for the priority of the Bible in all matters of religion and specifically for the position of the ministers as interpreters of Scripture. ... The bishops help the king to understand what exactly God wants from him.³¹

For Bullinger the function of the Christian Magistrate was utterly subsumed under God's own justice: he was under God's law and to establish himself as his own law – as is the case for all forms of modern democracy – was to claim for himself the title of Tyrant or, as we would say today, of totalitarian power. For Bullinger,

The prince, indeed, is the living law, if his mind obey the written laws, and square [separate] not from the law of nature. Power and authority, therefore, is subject unto laws; for unless the prince in his heart agree with the law, in his breast do write the law, and in his deeds express the law [ie God's law], he is not worthy to be called a good man, much less a prince.³²

But Bullinger's comprehensive mind adds the following *caveat* to his massive affirmation, showing how necessary a jurisprudential application of the law is essential to true equity, to the exercise of justice.

Again, a good prince and magistrate hath power over the law, and is master of the laws, not that they may turn, put out, undo, make and unmake, them as they list [wish], at their pleasure; but that he may put

³⁰ Pamela Biel, *op. cit.*, p. 35.

³¹ Pamela Biel, *op. cit.*, pp 35, 36.

³² *Decades*, I/II, p. 339.

them into practice among the people, apply them to the necessity of the state, and attemper their interpretation to the meaning of their maker.³³

And he continues:

Among all men, at all times and of all ages, the meaning and substance of the laws touching honesty, justice and public peace, is kept inviolable. If change is to be made, it is in the circumstances and the law is interpreted as the case requireth, according to justice and a good end. ... It is apparently evident that laws are good and not to be broken, and how far forth they do admit the prince's *epieikeion* (Aristotle, *Ethics*, Lib. V, cp 10), that is the prince's moderation, interpretation, limitation, or dispensation, lest peradventure that old and accustomed proverb be rightly applied unto them, Law with extremity is extreme injury.³⁴

And he gives as example the necessary difference in treatment, by a judge attentive to equity, of accidental homicide and premeditated murder, even though both acts end up in the killing of a person.

As to the content of the laws applied by the Magistrate, Bullinger speaks in no uncertain terms:

The apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ did bind or burden no man with the laws of Moses [here he of course means not all the laws of Moses but, as Aquinas teaches, only those laws of the *Torah* specific to the vocation of the Old Testament Israelite nation]; they never condemned good laws of the heathen, nor commended to any man naughty [evil] laws of the Gentiles, but left the laws, with the use and free choice of them, for the saints to use as they thought good. But therewithal they ceased not most diligently to beat into men's heads the fear of God, faith, charity, justice and temperance; because they knew that they in whose hearts those virtues were settled, can either easily make good laws themselves, or pick and choose out of the best of those which other men make. For it maketh no matter whether the magistrate pick out of Moses' Jewish laws, or out of the allowable laws of the heathen, sufficient laws for him and his countrymen, or else do keep still the old and accustomed laws which have before been used in his country, so that he have an eye to cut off such wicked, unjust and lawless laws, as one found to be thrust in among the better sort. ...

For civil and politic laws, I add this much, and say, that those seem to be the best laws, which according to the circumstances of every place, person, state, and time, do come nearest to the precepts of the ten

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ *Decades*, I/II, p. 340-341. The Latin adage reads *Summun jus, summa injuria*.

commandments and the rule of charity, not having in them any spot and iniquity, licentious liberty, or shameless dishonesty. Let them moreover, be brief and short, not stretched out beyond measure, and wrapped in with many expositions; let them have a full respect to the matter whereto they are directed, and not be frivolous and of no effect.³⁵

To conclude these quotations drawn from Bullinger's treatment of the Sixth Commandment in the *Decades* let us add that our *Zurich Antistes* in no way condoned any kind of confusion between the spiritual and temporal orders, a confusion leading either to the spiritual tyranny of the Church over the Magistrate or, contrariwise (as is much more common today), the accumulation of all power, both spiritual and temporal, in the hands of the Providential Welfare State. In this 17th sermon, which contains much of his teaching on these matters, Bullinger writes:

But our disputation tendeth not to the confounding of the offices and duties of the magistrates and ministers of the church, as that we would have the king to preach, to baptize and to minister the Lord's Supper; or the priest, on the other side, to sit in the judgement seat, and give judgement against a murderer, or by pronouncing sentence to take on matters of strife. The church of Christ hath, and retaineth, several and distinguished [distinct] offices; and God is a God of order, not of confusion.³⁶

To characterise Bullinger's complementary vision of the mutually supportive reciprocal relationship between the temporal and spiritual orders, a distinction which excluded both inchoate confusion and absolute separation, I can do no better, in closing this part of my lecture, than to refer to an astonishing text written in 1941 by a Serbian Orthodox theologian, Nicholas Velimirovitch, at the very moment Hitler launched his divisions in a massive onslaught on the Yugoslav Monarchy. This citation drawn from Velimirovitch's short theological and historical study, *Theodouly: The Serbian people as the Servant of God* will, I hope, help us better understand Bullinger's comprehensive understanding of the mutually dependent relationship, within the wider Commonwealth, of a faithful Church and a God-fearing Magistracy.

What then differentiates Theocracy from Theodouly? It is the difference between an imposed master and a voluntary servant. Theocracy can be of two kinds: clerical or lay. We only know clerical theocracy [ie the clerical tyranny of the Papacy] and it is profoundly despised in Europe;

³⁵ *Decades*, I/II, pp 342, 343.

³⁶ *Decades*, I/II, p. 329.

however lay theocracy is well known in the Muslim world, where Caliph and Sheikh or Shah holds a divine authority.³⁷

Of course our modern world knows a kind of ‘atheistic theocracy’ with the total sovereignty of a political power become god, a law unto itself and its own end, its own finality, in the modern totalitarian and democratic state. Speaking of the Patron Saint of the Serbian nation, Velimirovitch continues:

St Sava (1174-1235) by his example instituted and consolidated the reality of the public service of God in such a way that the Archbishop of Serbia became the principal servant of Christ in the spiritual sphere and the King of Serbia the first servant of Christ in the civil sphere. Thus, if the archbishop was the servant of Christ, all the clergy were also constituted servants of Christ; and if the King was also the servant of Christ, then all constituted powers, civil and military were equally established as servants of Christ.

The whole spiritual hierarchy was expected to serve Christ and likewise the whole civil and military hierarchy was also expected to be in Christ’s service. Thus it was not only expected of the Church that it be enrolled under the banner of the service of Jesus Christ, but also the State: the State, no less than the Church, and the King no less than the Archbishop. Theodouly, the service of God, was the way and the purpose of both the Church and the State, each in the entirety of their respective functions.³⁸

Such a comprehensive Orthodox view of the relation of harmony and reciprocal dependence between the godly magistrate and the faithful church would no doubt have found considerable sympathy with the *Antistes* of Zurich. But such a harmony between Church and State is difficult for us to understand today, confronted as we are with an antinomian and impious State (the Beast of biblical symbolism) and a prostituted spiritual power. The latter is not the Church, become largely spiritually and politically insignificant, but the general relativistic and ideological culture – ‘culture’ comes from ‘cult’, worship– a revolutionary civilisation establishing in all fields false and destructive norms, radically opposed both to God and to his Commandments.

3. The importance of History and Chronology in Bullinger’s Theology

³⁷ Nicolas Velimirovitch, *Théodule. Le peuple serbe comme serviteur de Dieu*, L’Age D’Homme, Lausanne, 1999, p. 12.

³⁸ *Ibid*, p. 13.

Now, this vision of the religious role of the Magistrate implies the normative value, in Bullinger's eyes, of the Old Testament. This leads us to a new aspect of our examination of the comprehensive character of his theology: his vision of the covenantal unity of history as a manifestation of God's providential action in time. The following quotation drawn from the brilliant study by Puerto-Rican Reformed theologian, Aurelio A. Garcia Archilla, *The Theology of History and Apologetic Historiography in Heinrich Bullinger*, subtitled *Truth in History*, will serve as an introduction to my remarks on this theme.

Bullinger is also particularly relevant for a technological and secularised society that has lost all sense of tradition. ... Bullinger's genius consists precisely in exploring how faith as handed down tradition becomes personally relevant as freely-received forgiveness of sins and new life. ... [T]he vast *corpus* he generated finds an explanation in the very complexity of exploring the whole of Biblical and ecclesiastical notions of history and then relating that totality to the scope of theological issues raised by the Reformation, without being simplistic.³⁹

Let us at once embark on this ambitious programme. One of the basic apologetic problems of the 16th Century Reformation was how to counter the Roman Catholic accusation of novelty. Bullinger's answer, one that coincided with one of his fundamental theological positions, was that, whatever the partisans of Rome affirmed to be some 'new doctrine' was in fact *The Old Faith*, as old as the *protoevangelion* of Genesis 3: 15. Bullinger did not place the beginning of the Christian Faith at the coming of Jesus Christ or with the outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost, but at the inauguration of God's redeeming Covenant with Adam, immediately after the Fall.

In *Der Alte Gloub*, 'The Old Faith'⁴⁰ he takes great pains to show that the whole of the gospel is already in Genesis 3: 15,

³⁹ Aurelio A. Garcia Archilla, *The Theology of History and Apologetic Historiography in Heinrich Bullinger. Truth in History*, Mellen Research University Press, San Francisco, 1992, p. 2.

⁴⁰ [Name absent], 'The Old Faith', pp 1-83 *Writings and Translations of Myles Coverdale, Bishop of Exeter*. See also Bullinger's 1534 text 'A Brief Exposition of the One and Eternal Testament or Covenant of God by Heinrich Bullinger' (1534) in Charles S. McCoy and J. Wayne Baker, *Fountainhead of Federalism. Heinrich Bullinger and the Covenantal Tradition*, Wipf and Stock, Eugene Oregon, 1999 (1991), pp 99-138.

And I will put enmity between thee [the serpent] and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; and it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.

Edward Dowey in his major essay on *Heinrich Bullinger as Theologian: Thematic, Comprehensive, Schematic* describes the amplitude of the Zurich Reformer's interpretation of this text. He 'derives practically the complete Apostle's Creed from that verse, as well as justification by faith, and also the first announcement of the Gospel.'⁴¹

That is to say, as the great Austrian Roman Catholic early 20th Century scholar, Wilhelm Schmidt, has amply shown from a universal study of the historical and ethnographic sources, (and this in complete contradiction to the long established evolutionist explanation of the origin of religion), true morality and true piety were original in human history. They were transmitted orally from Adam to Abel, then to Seth and his godly line of Patriarchs and through them to all the nations. They thus preceded the aberrant, idolatrous and magical forms of satanic irreligion.⁴² This was the very position defended by Bullinger's theological reconstruction of the history of mankind. For him *The Old Faith* took its origin in this first gospel proclamation in Genesis 3:15.

But let us now briefly examine, under the expert guidance of Aurelio Archilla, Bullinger's use of this text. His fundamental biblical premise is that there has always been only one way for fallen mankind to be reconciled to God, through the mediatory work of a salvation perfectly accomplished by the incarnation, death, resurrection and ascension of the Lord Jesus, true God as from all eternity, true man as from his conception

⁴¹ Edward Dowey, 'Heinrich Bullinger as Theologian: Thematic, Comprehensive, Schematic' in John H. Leith (Ed.) *Calvin Studies*, Vol. V, January 19-20, 1990, Davidson, N.C., pp 57, 58.

⁴² Wilhelm Schmidt SDV, *Origine et évolution de la religion. Les théories et les faits*, Bernard Grasset, Paris, 1931; *The Origin and Growth of Religion: Facts and Theories*, Methuen, London, 1931; *Primitive Revelation*, Herder, Saint Louis, 1939; *The Culture Historical Method of Ethnology*, Fortuny's, New York, 1939; *Der Ursprung der Gottesidee. Eine Historisch-kritische und positive studie*, (12 vols), 1926-1955. On Wilhelm Schmidt see: Ernest Brandewie, *Wilhelm Schmidt and the Origin of the Idea of God*, University Press of America, Lanham, 1983 and *When Giants Walked the Earth. The Life and Times of Wilhelm Schmidt SDV*, University Press Fribourg, Fribourg (Switzerland), 1990. A Protestant confirmation of Schmidt's discoveries is to be found in the work of Samuel M. Zwemer, Professor of History of Religion at Princeton, in *The Origins of Religion*, Cokesbury Press, Nashville, TN, 1935.

in time in the virgin's womb. He applies this unique salvation with great care to the whole of biblical revelation, Old and New Testaments. Archilla explains:

‘The specific locus in which Bullinger finds God’s purpose of salvation in Christ expressed as a promise to Adam and Eve, is the so-called *protoevangelion*, in Genesis 3: 15.’⁴³

Archilla goes on:

Bullinger here finds:

- 1. The virgin birth: «To this is appended “of the woman”, for our Lord was not conceived and born from male seed, but from the Holy Ghost out of Mary the Virgin ...
- 2. Evidence of the continuity of the promise in the word *seed*: ‘And this little word seed is from here on over and over reaffirmed, used and brought out in every renewal of the promise of Jesus Christ, by all patriarchs and prophets up to the time of David; after David the Lord is rather called a flower, the stem, twig of shoot of David. The holy apostle Paul explains with great clarity the word seed, and states it signifies Christ (Gal. Ch. 3).’

He also finds:

- 3. Praise of Mary: ‘Consequently this also works to the praise of the Lord’s mother, that the Lord says: ‘I will establish enmity between the woman and you.’ For he grasps a lack of similarity between their respective natures. The Devil is proud, crafty, evil, false and a liar; the mother of Christ on the other hand is humble, simple, virtuous, true, upright, chaste and pure.’⁴⁴

But what here is of vital importance is the fact that Bullinger clearly draws from this text the very heart of the gospel itself, the Covenant of Salvation: the central doctrine of justification by faith alone. This fact in itself invalidates Wayne Baker’s thesis that Bullinger defended ‘another reformed tradition’ from that of Geneva, that of a bilateral covenant between God and mankind, a covenant where human works played some kind of role in the work of redemption, this in response to God’s grace.⁴⁵ We must here add that there is no textual basis for the thesis of those (like the scholarly expositor of *The Second Helvetic Confession*, Ernst Koch),

⁴³ Archilla, *op. cit.*, p. 18.

⁴⁴ Archilla, *op. cit.*, p. 21, quoting *Der Alte Gloub*.

⁴⁵ J. Wayne Baker, *Heinrich Bullinger and the Covenant. The Other Reformed Tradition*, Ohio University Press, Athens, Ohio, 1980; McCoy and Baker, *Fountainhead of Federalism*.

who invent a prelapsarian covenant in Bullinger's theology.⁴⁶ Let us allow Bullinger to speak for himself. We quote from *The Old Faith*:

In the end the Lord says that he wished to establish an enmity between the Serpent and the seed of the woman. Clearly the devil, his cohorts and deeds oppose Christ and his fellows and deeds. However vigorously the Serpent may defend himself, he will be crushed by Christ and his believers. Concerning this Paul has spoken so comfortingly in Romans 16: Very soon the God of peace will crush the devil under your feet. Here also the duty of believers in Christ is briefly stated. For those who say: Is it enough and does it satisfy everything, if I acknowledge that I am a sinner and am saved only through the Blessed Seed? It is so answered here and clearly given to understand, that all those who place their trust upon the Blessed Seed, take upon themselves the ways of the Seed and hate the ways of the Serpent, that is sin, will also struggle for ever and ever in their lives against the world and the devil, and truly strive in themselves after what God wills.⁴⁷

Archilla comments this passage thus:

This is a most crucial passage, for it identifies the first giving of the promise of salvation in Christ – the one and eternal covenant– in terms not of works or the law, but as a response of faith alone in Christ. This is the human condition of the covenant, and it unites the soteriology of all the Old and New Testament, of Israel and the Church. From the fall itself there has been no means of salvation other than faith in God's promise in Christ. Indeed the editor of the 1624 English edition [of *The Old Faith*] understood aptly and fully the weight of Bullinger's apologetic, when he subtitled the work, 'Look from Adam, and behold the Protestant faith.'⁴⁸

For Bullinger it thus follows that the history of the world is none other than the annals of the continual conflict between the descendants of the true seed of God and the progeny of the Devil. Archilla comments:

⁴⁶ Ernst Koch, *Die Theologie der Confessio Helvetica Posterior*, Neukirchener Verlag, Neukirchen, 1968. For an excellent analysis of the development of Reformed teaching on the creational Covenant see: Rowland S. Ward, *Reformed Theology and The Creation Covenant*, New Melbourne Press, 358 Mountain Highway, Wantirna, 3152 Australia, 2003.

⁴⁷ Archilla, *op. cit.*, p. 22, quoting *Der Alte Gloub*.

⁴⁸ Archilla, *op. cit.*, pp 22, 23.

In accordance with this [Augustinian] theology Cain and Abel became the representatives of the two peoples whose differences will constitute the gist of history.⁴⁹

Archilla again quotes Bullinger at length on his understanding of covenantal human history:

Just as an example of the seed of God and of a true born-again right-believing Christian is presented for us in Abel, so too Cain is a seed of the Serpent, a child of the devil, who despises the admonishment of God, and listens of the seductive serpent. And in these two brothers one can see what God meant when he said: I will establish enmity between the woman and your seed. In one word he said: there will be two peoples, one will follow the blessed seed, Christ, the other will follow the devil. And these two generations will never come together, but will always be separate in faith and religion.⁵⁰

And Bullinger adds:

For these two brothers have presented us the whole strife and struggle which the world, the city of the devil, the children and citizens of the cursed city in which the serpent is head and master and has rule, will lead against the city and citizens in which Christ is the head unto the end of the world. The citizens of the city of God and of Christ depend exclusively on God, serve him with whole hearts and build upon Christ alone. Those who dwell with the serpent despise God yet brag of him, wanting to make offerings to him and serve him, yet they do not do it as they should. When they become aware that their faith is not right, and that their pretence is recognised and found disgusting, then they resort to murder, which God opposes, and he rebukes them with his word.⁵¹

These two genealogies of piety and iniquity can be traced throughout biblical history. They culminate, on the one hand, in the incarnation of the True Seed in the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ and, on the other, in his murder at the hands of the Seed of Cain, apostate Israel, a historical manifestation of the mystery of iniquity. The central place Bullinger assigns to the historical continuity of the true faith from Adam to Jesus Christ explains his passionate interest in biblical chronology and his conviction that its divinely inspired accuracy coheres with the infallibility of the Scriptures. This interest in history and in biblical chronology in particular was universal within the ancient theological tradition, that is until

⁴⁹ Archilla, *op. cit.*, p. 25.

⁵⁰ Archilla, *op. cit.*, p. 25, quoting *Der Alte Gloub.*

⁵¹ Archilla, *op. cit.*, p. 26, quoting *Der Alte Gloub.*

the middle of the 17th Century. The last great practitioner of this biblically inspired view of history was Jean-Baptiste Bénigné Bossuet (1627-1704) who published his *Discours sur l'histoire universelle* in 1681. From the Reformed tradition the last great biblical chronographer was the eminent Irish theologian, Archbishop of Armagh, James Ussher (1581-1656) who played a leading role in compiling the *Irish Articles* (1615) a major source for the *Westminster Confession* (1646).⁵²

The chronological faithfulness and historical accuracy of the Bible was of capital importance for the ongoing history of the conflict between the seed of the woman and of the Devil. A brief extract from the *Decades* will show the intensity of his interest in these historical and chronological matters.

Noah lived in this world 950 years. When the flood happened he had already lived 600 years. Therefore he had seen and heard all the holy fathers of the first age before the flood, with the exception of three: Adam, Seth and Enos. And he lived together many years with the others who had seen and heard those [three], so that he could not have been ignorant of any of the things which Adam handed down. Noah died (which is a marvellous thing to say, yet nonetheless true) when Abram was 59 years old.⁵³

Such a respect for the historical and chronological truth of the Bible is a refreshing change from the current capitulation by Old Testament scholars (Christian or otherwise), before the fragile hypotheses of the profane history of the Ancient Middle East. These speculative constructions are largely based on the contradictory and obscure lists of Egyptian dynasties to be found in the 3rd Century B.C. account of the Egyptian priest, Manetho.⁵⁴ In contrast to the biblical historiographical tradition exemplified by Bullinger's chronological work, Christian biblical historians have, since the second part of the 17th Century, all too readily sold their chronological birthright for a mess of Academic pottage. Biblical chronology, as it was understood by such great scholars as Bullinger, Ussher and Bossuet, went

⁵² Crawford Gribben, *The Irish Puritans. James Ussher and the Reformation of the Church*, Evangelical Press, Darlington, 2003, p. 38. It is encouraging to note the renewed interest in the historical and chronological work of Ussher with the recent republication of his masterpiece, *The Annals of the World*, 2003 (Master Books, P.O. Box 726, Green Forest, Arizona 72638), so long out of print.

⁵³ Archilla, *op. cit.*, p. 29, *Decades* I, Sermon 1.

⁵⁴ *Manetho*, Trans. W. G. Waddell, Loeb Classical Library, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MS, 1997 (1940).

out of fashion with the coming of the *Enlightenment* and was one of the first victims of the modern rationalist onslaught on the Bible as the trustworthy self-revelation – and faithful revelation of human history – of the Triune God, the God of Scripture who can neither fall into error nor lie. The Enlightenment view of History, which is that of just about all Academia today, has dogmatically asserted its total autonomy from the pretended ‘superstitions’ contained in the Christian Scriptures. From a historiographical point of view, our present day Christian scholarship has, by and large, caved in to this arrant lie. It is high time we broke free from such unnecessary intellectual bondage.

Let me give you just two examples: the only scholarly biblical history I know that starts off from the premise that biblical history and chronology are absolutely true and thus normative for the history and chronology of the Ancient Near East, is, surprisingly, neither Roman Catholic, Reformed, Lutheran nor Evangelical. It is the extraordinary work of two Jewish scholars, André and Renée Neher, and bears the simple title *L’histoire biblique du peuple d’Israël (A Biblical History of the People of Israel)*.⁵⁵ The other example is that of the obvious fact of the total discrepancy, if one follows the officially accepted chronology of the Ancient Near East, between the events described in the Bible and contemporary events in the history of Israel’s neighbours, particularly those of the Egyptian dual monarchy. This leads many secular historians and archaeologists specialised in the history of the Ancient Near East to consider the biblical accounts pure fiction. It is clear that if the Bible is not true historically it cannot be considered any more trustworthy than the

⁵⁵ André et Renée Neher, *Histoire biblique du peuple d’Israël*, 2 vols, Adrien Maisonneuve, Paris, 1962. (Still available in one volume). For cultural and linguistic confirmation of the historicity of the Pentateuch see: E. W. Hengstenberg, *Egypt and the Books of Moses or The Books of Moses Illustrated by the Monuments of Egypt*, Allen, Morrill and Wardwell, Andover, 1843; Samuel A. B. Mercer, *Extra-biblical Sources for Hebrew and Jewish History*, Longman, Green and Co., London, 1913; A. S. Yahuda, *Language of the Pentateuch in its Relation to Egyptian*, Oxford University Press, 1933; *The Accuracy of the Bible. The Stories of Joseph, the Exodus and Genesis Confirmed and Illustrated by Egyptian Monuments and Language*, E. P. Dutton, London, 1935; James A. Pritchard (Ed.), *The Ancient Near East. An Anthology of Texts and Pictures*, 2 vols, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1958 and 1975. For a recent defence of the historicity of the Bible from the traditionally recognised official chronological point of view: K. A. Kitchen, *On the Reliability of the Old Testament*, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 2003.

fictional legends of various religious mythologies. Fortunately, some scholars have in past decades come to question the arbitrary presuppositions of the officially accepted chronology. The revised chronology of the Ancient Near East which is gradually being established is beginning to show amazingly precise correlations between the history, in particular of Egypt, and that of Israel. This revised chronology, correcting the official chronology, sometimes by up to 700 years (!), confirms time and again the historical exactitude of the Bible and, in passing, clears up many difficulties provoked by the massive errors of the chronology based on Manetho's dynastic count.⁵⁶ It is becoming clear, from current efforts to reconsider the officially accepted chronology of the Ancient Near East, that the Bible gives us (as one should have naturally been led to expect from a book both inspired and infallible!) the absolute chronological landmarks so lacking in the confusion of the chronologies of the ancient world.⁵⁷ In all

⁵⁶ There is a long history of criticism of the official chronology of the ANE based on Manetho's Egyptian dynasties. See J. Lieblein, *Recherches sur la chronologie égyptienne*, Christiania, 1873; Cecil Torr, *Memphis and Mycenae. With Supplementary Material on the Chronology Debate*, ISIS, Harpenden, Herts, 1988 (1896); Immanuel Velikovsky, *Ages in Chaos, From the Exodus to King Akhnaton*, Doubleday, 1952; *Oedipus and Akhnaton*, Doubleday, New York, 1960; *Peoples of the Sea*, Doubleday, New York, 1977; *Ramses II and his Time*, Sidgwick and Jackson, London, 1978; Donovan Courville, *The Exodus Problem and its Ramifications. A Critical Examination of the Chronological Relationship Between Israel and the Contemporary Peoples of Antiquity*, 2 vols, Challenge Books, Loma Linda CA, 1971; Peter James (Ed.), *Centuries of Darkness. A challenge to the conventional chronology of Old World archaeology*, Jonathan Cape, London, 1991; David Rohl, *A Test of Time. The Bible – from Myth to History*, Random House, London, 1995; *Legend. The Genesis of Civilisation*, Century, 1998; *The Lost Testament. From Eden to Exile. The Five-Thousand-Year History of the People of the Bible*, Century, London, 2002; Roger Henry, *Synchronized Chronology. Rethinking Middle East Antiquity*, Algora, NY, 2003.

⁵⁷ For the careful establishment of a normative biblical chronology, Martin Anstey, *The Romance of Biblical Chronology*, 2 vols, Marshall, London, 1913; Philip Mauro, *The Wonders of Bible Chronology. From the Creation of Adam to the Resurrection of Jesus Christ*, GAM, Sterling V, 1987 (1933); Edward R. Thiele, *A Chronology of the Hebrew Kings*, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, 1977; *The Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings*, Kregel, Grand Rapids, 1994 (1983); Harold W. Hoehner, *Chronological Aspects of the Life of Christ*, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, 1977. For a remarkable scholarly justification of the impeccable historicity of the two Davidic genealogies of Jesus in Matthew and Luke: Jacques Masson, *Jésus, fils de David dans les généalogies de saint Matthieu et de saint Luc*, Téqui, Paris,

this we are happily rediscovering and gradually returning to the biblical norm of a thoroughly objective, historiography and chronology such as they were practised by Bullinger and by his peers, trustworthy because founded on the accurate historical revelation of the God of history.

It is striking to note that Bullinger's interest in the past was in no way limited to what we would today call 'Church History'. For him, as for the biblical authors, the whole of history, secular and religious, was placed under the sovereign authority of God's providence and could be deciphered by that normative discerning intelligence developed in us by the submission of our minds to the Word. Further, it was clear to him that God's constant intervention in the affairs of men was in no way limited to the history of Israel or to biblical times. The conflict between the two seeds was prolonged into the life of all nations by the universal proclamation of the gospel. In addition, the honest study of history in the light of the covenant, for example that of the Swiss Confederation for which Bullinger had so great an admiration and such a deep attachment, could bring out the truthful meaning (that is its significance in the divine perspective) of what we in our unbelief call 'profane or secular' history. As if anything could escape the meaning given to all things by the Creator, to all events by divine providence. For Bullinger, the covenantal principles to be found in biblical history could also be discovered by the careful and honest study of post-biblical times. He was also very attentive to the need for objectivity in the study of the past, that is for the care to be taken in studying all the available documents, those of one's opponents as well as those of one's friends.

His was a truly comprehensive view of reality – all things were subsumed under the vision of the world given to our intelligence as it was illumined by the Christian faith. For Bullinger all thoughts (and not only religious or theological thoughts) must be brought captive to the obedience

1982. On the historicity of the Gospels see: Arthur Loth, *Jésus-Christ dans l'histoire* François-Xavier de Guibert, Paris, 2003. From another angle, it has been recently discovered that the royal chronologies of many N European Early Medieval Monarchies all end up, by diverse routes, in Noah's third son, Japhet. See: Bill Cooper, *After the Flood. The early post-flood history of Europe traced back to Noah*, New Wine Press, Chichester, 1995. Further, the ideograms of the Chinese language have been discovered to contain many precise indications referring to events in Genesis: C. H. Kong and Ethel R. Nelson, *The Discovery of Genesis. How the Truths of Genesis Were Found Hidden in the Chinese Language*, CPH, St Louis, 1979; Ethel R. Nelson and Richard E. Broadberry, *Genesis and the Mystery Confucius couldn't solve*, CPH, St Louis, 1994.

of Christ, that is every aspect of God's created and fallen reality. We shall let Archilla conclude for us this aspect of our present subject:

Thus an understanding of the Christian faith as history of salvation, starting with Genesis 3: 15 and from then on presented by means of the doctrine of the two cities, draws Bullinger through all the biblical material. Since by virtue of the unity of the covenant, Israel and the church are one, this same pattern will serve Bullinger to continue to explain human history from the close of biblical narrative to the present, which he sees as an eschatological moment ...

Here [in *The Old Faith*] we have a narrative understanding of salvation as the unfolding in human history of God's promise and covenant to repair the damage of the fall. Incorporating ideas from the Augustinian heritage of the church, he presents the Reformers' understanding of salvation by grace alone through faith, as an ongoing drama in history, which gives it its meaning. Through this framework, he seeks to discern the ways of God in the present crisis. In spite of his many conventionalities, or perhaps because of them, Bullinger recovers a dynamic diachronic reading of a Sacred Scripture that was not concluded when the last book of the Bible was written, but which would continue to be written in human affairs in bold letters by God's finger even in the Antistes' day, until the Lord should bring it to a close with the second inbreaking into human history.⁵⁸

4. Scripture, Predestination and Covenant: a truly comprehensive Faith

Much else could usefully be said on this immensely scholarly doctor of the Church, this incomparable pastor, this man of indomitable faith whose mighty works, though today largely forgotten and sadly neglected, still spread, for whoever takes the trouble to consult them, a truly heavenly light. The reading of the *Zurich Letters*, published in three volumes by the Parker Society in the middle of the 19th Century,⁵⁹ leaves an overwhelming

⁵⁸ Archilla, *op. cit.*, pp 35, 36.

⁵⁹ Hastings Robinson (Ed.), *Original Letters of the English Reformation written during the Reigns of King Henry VIII, King Edward VI and Queen Mary chiefly from the Archives of Zurich, First and Second Portions*, The Parker Society, The University Press, Cambridge 1846-1847; *The Zurich Letters (2nd Series) comprising the correspondence of several English Bishops and others with some of the Helvetian Reformers, during the reign of Queen Elizabeth*, The Parker Society, The University Press, Cambridge 1845.

impression of the mighty and tender love, which animated those English saints and their brethren from Zurich, the *Antistes* most particularly. Some have tried (in vain!) to pit Bullinger against Calvin, Calvin against the Zurich *Antistes*. Such a supposed antagonism has been resolved, as far as their common hermeneutical principles are concerned, by John T. Leith. His findings have been amply confirmed by Joel E. Kok in an illuminating comparison of certain specific passages in Bullinger and Calvin's comments on Paul's *Letter to the Romans*. Peter Lillback has also rendered similar service with regard to the doctrine of the Covenant and Paul Rorem with regard to the difficult debate between Calvin and Bullinger on the theology of the Lord's Supper.

On their common attitude towards Scripture John H. Leith makes these illuminating remarks:

Calvin, to my knowledge, never formally summarized his hermeneutical principles beyond his various statements on the need for brevity and density, on the importance of the natural sense of scripture. From his writings other distinctive principles become clear, such as Calvin's emphasis on the unity of the Old and New Testaments and of God's accommodation of himself to the human situation in revelation. Calvin has a deep awareness that Scripture has an integrity and a coherence of its own. His insistence that scripture must be interpreted by scripture enables him to integrate problematic texts in his preaching and into his Theology.

For the Reformers, generally, method grew out of the reality of what they were doing. Bullinger's summary in his sermon on the «Sense and right exposition of the Word of God» is an exception to this silence concerning method. His principles were (1) the rule of faith; (2) love of God and neighbour; (3) the historical situation; (4) scripture interpreted in the context of scripture; (5) a heart that loves God and continually prays to God for the Holy Spirit. ... [T]his would seem to be a fair summary of Calvin's own hermeneutical principles.⁶⁰

Some have nonetheless sought to contrast Calvin's exegesis with that of Bullinger. In the concluding remarks of his outstanding article comparing Bullinger and Calvin's exegesis of selected passages of their respective commentaries on Romans Kok writes:

⁶⁰ John H. Leith, Calvin's Doctrine of the Proclamation of the Word and Its Significance for Today in Timothy George (Ed.), *John Calvin and the Church. A Prism for Reform*, Westminster-John Knox Press, Louisville, KY, 1990, pp 214, 215.

Comparing Bullinger's and Calvin's commentaries on Romans has yielded not dramatic but consistent results. While they agree on exegetical standards such as clarity and brevity, Bullinger's emphasis on simple explanation differs from Calvin's emphasis on doctrinal precision and correction. While they agree in upholding their evangelical testimony on justification against Roman Catholic opposition, Bullinger's emphasis on externalism and image worship differs from Calvin's emphasis on doctrinal error and conceptual idolatry. While they agree that God alone saves sinners through Christ alone, Bullinger is more defensive than Calvin is regarding predestination and reprobation and more hopeful regarding the possible salvation of noble pagans. The common theme for these various differences in emphasis is the way in which Bullinger and Calvin perceive how the clarity of the gospel presents itself to the attentive mind. For Bullinger the gospel is clear because God is sheer light, and if we overcome our apathy and ignorance, we can easily see this. Calvin too, finds the human race asleep in their sins, but he also gives more attention to our delusions and false ideas, from which the gospel must cast us down. Bullinger emphasises the gospel overcoming our dullness; Calvin emphasises the gospel subduing our stubborn errors.⁶¹

Such a difference in accent and balance can by no imaginable means be considered as constituting in Bullinger what Baker has called, 'The Other Reformed tradition'.⁶²

Cornelius P. Venema has recently written a decisive monograph on the capital question of the doctrine of predestination in Bullinger and Calvin.⁶³ He shows the profound concordance between their theologies, thus confirming Robert C. Walton's carefully nuanced appreciation of Bullinger's position: *Was God's grace available to all?* Walton asks this of Bullinger and replies for him:

The answer is no. The theme that some were excluded from becoming co-heirs of Christ in eternity runs like a red thread through Bullinger's theology. The question remains, was Bullinger a double predestinarian? The answer is a cautious yes. Bullinger believed that this is what the

⁶¹ Joel E. Kok, Heinrich Bullinger's Exegetical Method: The Model for Calvin? in: Richard A. Muller, John L. Thompson (Eds), *Biblical Interpretation in the Era of the Reformation*, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1996, pp 253, 254.

⁶² J. Wayne Baker, *op. cit.*, title page.

⁶³ Cornelis P. Venema, *Heinrich Bullinger and the Doctrine of Predestination. Author of «the other Reformed Tradition?»* Baker Academic, 2002.

Bible said: '[God], by his eternal unchangeable counsel, hath fore-appointed who are to be saved, and who are to be condemned.' The end of the decision was 'Christ, the Son of God', in whom 'God hath chosen us ... before the foundation of the world.' In developing this doctrine he was careful to say that man was responsible for his own fall. God knew of it in advance and God permitted it but did not cause it. From a pastoral perspective, what was striking about Bullinger's doctrine is that he believed faith was a 'sign of election' which could be applied to cities as well as to individuals, and that he left an important place for worship and prayer in the life of the believer. Bullinger viewed the ability to worship and pray, and to do good works as signs of faith, or grace. In this he differed from Calvin who was far more cautious in equating the claim that one had faith or any other human action with a 'sign of election'.⁶⁴

Cornelius Venema in his study 'Heinrich Bullinger and the Doctrine of Predestination' confirms in detail Walton's assessment. He quotes a letter written by Bullinger to Calvin on the December 1st 1551 concerning the Bolsec controversy, where the ex-Carmelite monk (soon to return to the Roman Church) accused Calvin and Zwingli of teaching, by their doctrine of double predestination, the divine origin of evil. Bullinger wrote to his colleague and friend:

Now believe me, many are offended by your statements on predestination in your *Institutes*, and from that Hieronymous [Bolsec] has drawn the same conclusion as he did from Zwingli's book on providence. In fact, it is my opinion that the apostles touched upon this sublime matter only briefly, and not unless compelled to do so and even in such circumstances, they were cautious that the pious were not thereby offended, but understood God to desire well for all men, and also to offer salvation in Christ, which itself can be received not by one's own worth but by faith which is truly a gift of God. And indeed the elect are chosen on account of Christ and his grace and not on account of any

⁶⁴ Robert C. Walton, Heinrich Bullinger 1504-1575 in, Jill Raitt (Ed), *Shapers of Religious Traditions in Germany, Switzerland and Poland 1560-1600* p. 84. In his notes Walton gives all the references in the *Decades* for his characterisation of Bullinger's doctrine. For a detailed confirmation of the concordance of Calvin's teaching on the Covenant with that of Bullinger, see Peter A. Lillback, *The Binding of God. Calvin's role in the Development of Covenant Theology*, Baker Academic, Grand Rapids, 2001.

respect of their own; the reprobate perish truly on account of their own guilt, and not by the malice of God.⁶⁵

Here Venema comments,

In this remarkable statement, Bullinger implicitly criticises Calvin for exceeding the boundaries of this question as they were determined by the example of the apostles. By doing so, Calvin risked giving offence to the pious, since he gave the impression that God does not intend well for all men. For Bullinger, those who are reprobate (*reprobi*) perish by virtue of their own guilt, not because of any malice on God's part (*non Dei malignitate*).⁶⁶

For Bullinger,

If Calvin only sought to uphold God's grace against those who boasted of their works, no one would oppose him. But to teach that God not only foresaw but also predestined⁶⁷ the fall of Adam [in the fully active sense of our predestination to salvation (JMB)] was to make God the author of sin. When Calvin spoke, moreover, of God raising up vessels of wrath, and of God blinding and hardening the heart of the unbeliever, he spoke in a way that the church fathers never condoned. Such expressions were not required in order to honour God's mercy and grace.⁶⁸

For Bullinger considered, as did the Fathers and Thomas Aquinas, as foundational to the faith, God's absolute goodness and the inherent goodness of the unfallen creation. Sin was not original, did not come first. First came the perfectly good creation. Its goodness was substantial; the sin and corruption were, in a sense, accidents. The goodness of the creation was the ground base, the present fallen nature of the universe a variation on that base. However real the present fallen condition of man and nature, Bullinger's theology did not start from a corrupted creation and a sinful man. That is why, as Venema clearly points out,

... Bullinger maintained in this [1551] correspondence [with Calvin over the Bolsec controversy] that we must emphasise the universal promises of the gospel, and avoid such language as tends to distort God's good will towards his creatures. We ought to retain a good hope for all and

⁶⁵ Cornelis P. Venema, *op. cit.*, p. 61-62.

⁶⁶ Cornelis P. Venema, *op. cit.*, p. 62.

⁶⁷ Here Venema distorts Bullinger. Bullinger believed in God's total sovereignty over all things, including damnation of the reprobate. His quarrel with Calvin was with the latter's unnecessarily excessive and inappropriate application of certain biblical expressions with regard to these matters.

⁶⁸ Cornelis P. Venema, *op. cit.*, p. 67.

avoid language, condoned neither by the apostles nor the fathers, which might repulse or engender hatred and slander against God. Calvin, in this regard, ought not to speak of God creating vessels of wrath simply for destruction; nor should he offend by writing that the hearing of the gospel is used by God only to harden the hearts and blind the eyes of those who are not elect. Such language does not reflect the fact that God is a *philanthropos*, that there is no malice in him (*non Dei malignitate*).⁶⁹

Venema concludes,

Bullinger continued to uphold the main tenets of historic Augustinianism on the doctrine of predestination. However, he demurred from the severe form in which Calvin cut the doctrine, preferring to emphasise themes that were, in his judgement, in danger of being muted— themes such as God’s good will toward all in the preaching of the gospel, the universality of the promises of the gospel, and the culpability of the probate for their ultimate condemnation.⁷⁰

Conclusion

A truly comprehensive faith: Biblical, Orthodox and Catholic

A good deal of what has been written on Bullinger follows the 19th Century conception of what constitutes systematic theology: the logical organisation of all the biblical material around one or two so-called basic theological principles. The arbitrary identification of Calvin’s theology with predestination is an example of this erroneous method. Other examples with regard to Bullinger are Baker’s idea of a bilateral covenant as the fundamental motif of his theology⁷¹ and Koch’s projection of a purely imaginary Adamic Covenant into the theology of the *Second Helvetic Confession*.⁷²

Under the beneficent influence of Edward Dowey’s exemplary essay, ‘Heinrich Bullinger as Theologian’⁷³ more recent scholarship has come, it seems to me, to a more balanced and exact view of Bullinger’s theological achievement.⁷⁴ What he sought for his theology was not an abstract

⁶⁹ Cornelis P. Venema, *op. cit.*, p. 68.

⁷⁰ Cornelis P. Venema, *op. cit.*, p. 69.

⁷¹ J. Wayne Baker, *Heinrich Bullinger and the Covenant: The Other Reformed Tradition*.

⁷² Ernst Koch, *Die Theologie der Confessio Helvetica Posterior*, Neukirchener Verlag, Neukirchen, 1968.

⁷³ *Calvin Studies*, Volume V, *op. cit.*

⁷⁴ See particularly the writings of Archilla, Venema and Rorem, as well as Lillback.

systematic organisation of all the materials contained in general and special revelation, developed in a logically coherent whole according to one or two organising principles. Such theological rationalisation is to be expected from a post-cartesian and positivistic mentality prone to reductionist analysis. What was important, nay vital, for Bullinger was the proclamation of all the elements contained in God's revelation, brought together in a coherent, comprehensive and balanced way. This was done in various ways in different works, the order of presentation of the theological material depending on the purpose in hand and the immediate needs of the Church. Here it is appropriate to quote some of Dowey's conclusions. Speaking of Bullinger's comprehensive works, he writes of his 1527 *Loci Communes Sacri*

... which was ... significant in showing (1) the breadth and comprehensiveness of Bullinger's grasp from the beginning, (2) the early prominence of the covenant idea in both biblical interpretation and theological construction, and (3) a general sequence of topics that is (apart from opening with the covenant, which he was not to do again for thirty years), in several sequences, [procedure which was] to characterize his later work.

Dowey goes on:

For example: the priority of Scripture, the close relation of the doctrine of God with the theme of true and false worship, elaborate concern for Old Testament Law, a limited law / gospel scheme carefully differentiated from Luther, the Gospel of Christian liberty, and a broad practical concern for all aspects of Christian life and perils.⁷⁵

Of the *Decades* he writes:

Bullinger's *Decades*, a major reformation classic, is unchallengeable as his most full bodied and comprehensive theological work, containing the richness of his scholarship, gathering together themes of all his major writings up to that time, and exhibiting the churchly purpose of being a theological source book for pastors to aid them in the preparation of sermons.⁷⁶

The first part opens with 12 documents of the Ancient Church. Dowey comments:

Their choice represents Bullinger's consistent claim to be 'ancient and orthodox' and are essential to the *Decades*, not merely prefatory matter.

⁷⁵ Dowey, *op. cit.*, p. 51.

⁷⁶ Dowey, *op. cit.*, p. 52. The familiar character of the *Decades* led this body of theology to be called in its German edition the *Hausbuch*.

... [This] is part of the unrelenting motif of Bullinger to show that the Reformed faith is that of the early church, through Nicea and Chalcedon, and that further more the early fathers and the great councils all *appealed to Scripture*.⁷⁷

Of the *Second Helvetic Confession*, Dowey writes:

... This work is Bullinger's major, formal effort to speak to and for the church catholic, orthodox and reformed. ... General characteristics of the *Confession* express outstanding characteristics of Bullinger's thought, already observed in other writings: a theology that is totally non speculative, but throughout oriented to the existing practical life of believers in the church before God and in the context of the world (history); a broad churchly consciousness by which the whole history of creedal and confessional response (including major controversies) is always in play; and a grouping, as in the *Decades*, of patristic, early creedal material separately from the main soteriological themes of the Reformation; and the whole based upon and held together by the most catholic of all doctrines for Bullinger, namely Scripture alone as the source of the Christian faith.⁷⁸

You may now begin better to understand why my first suggestion for the title of this lecture was: 'Heinrich Bullinger and the catholicity – that is the total comprehensiveness – of the faith'. Is it then, looking to the path we have covered together this evening, a matter of surprise that Archilla entitles the fifth chapter of his book: *The Orthodoxy and the Catholicity of the Evangelical Churches*⁷⁹, here doing nothing else but echoing the title of one of Bullinger's treatises published in 1562, *The Evangelical Churches Are Neither Heretical Nor Schismatic, Rather Plainly Orthodox and Catholic Churches of Jesus Christ*.⁸⁰

Bullinger bases his defence of the Church of the Reformation as the Orthodox and Catholic Church in the first place on its full reception of the biblical canon:

The church of Christ which in order to be distinguished from the Papistical church is called evangelical, recognizes and receives the canonical books of both Testaments, as uttered by the very mouth of

⁷⁷ Dowey, *op. cit.*, pp 53, 54.

⁷⁸ Dowey, *op. cit.*, p. 56.

⁷⁹ Archilla, *op. cit.*, p, 167.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.* Heinrich Bullinger, *Ecclesias evangelicas neque haereticas necque schismaticas, sed plane orthodoxas & catholicas esse Iesu Christi ecclesias ...*, Gesneri et Vuysenbachij, Zurich, 1562.

God. It does not deny or spurn any, rather it receives them each as a whole. Neither does it dispute contrivedly about the reception of the books, who should receive or who should repudiate them, for is it not more likely that the church receives authority from Scripture, than vice-versa.⁸¹

For Bullinger the canon has prior authority for it is the sure witness of the Apostolic Church.

For while the Apostles and Disciples of Christ were still living, the different Gospels came to be in the church; and attest to what was genuine and what was spurious.⁸²

Archilla comments:

Bullinger thus, does not oppose a holy canon of books or witness to the witness of the living church. Rather he counterpoises trustworthy tradition or witness to false tradition. He does not sever the patristic church from the apostolic church, rather he receives patristic tradition inasmuch as it coheres to the witness of the apostolic church present in the canon: the Evangelical church is in communion with and in succession of the catholic church of all times which receives this witness. It is not a question of attacking the tradition of the church for Bullinger; much to the contrary he seeks to affirm the true tradition of the church catholic which consists in the witness of Scripture.⁸³

But as Archilla points out, for Bullinger:

... this complete and self-standing canon is not a flat surface, but it implies a given hermeneutics. With Second Peter he affirms these words do not come from the will of human beings, 'but the holy ones of God spoke impelled by the Holy Spirit, therefore prophetic scripture is not of private interpretation' [2 Peter 1: 20, 21], but quoting Romans twelve, it is 'to be moderated according to the measure of faith'. Thus 'the Evangelical churches do not receive or recognize any interpretation of Scripture whatsoever, but only that sense which that Scripture in itself demands, which comes from the Spirit of God by whom Scripture is inspired, which agrees with itself throughout and which is in concordance with the rule of faith and love.'⁸⁴

⁸¹ Archilla, *op. cit.*, p. 167 quoting Bullinger, *Ecclesias evangelicas*, p. 12.

⁸² Archilla, *op. cit.*, p. 168 quoting Bullinger, *Ecclesias evangelicas*, p. 13.

⁸³ Archilla, *op. cit.*, p. 168-170.

⁸⁴ Archilla, *op. cit.*, p. 172-172, quoting Bullinger, *Ecclesias evangelicas (...)*, p. 17-18.

Thus, such an attitude to tradition in no way implies the rejection of the interpretative tradition of the church insofar as it conforms itself to the divinely given meaning of Scripture. Bullinger writes:

But here we do not repudiate or hold in contempt in the least the disputations and scriptural expositions of the Blessed Fathers, the antistes or doctors of the ancient church, as for example, Irenaeus, Origen, Chrysostom, Ambrose, Jerome, Augustine and others like these, as long as both their exposition and conclusion depart in nothing from those apostolic rules [of faith].⁸⁵

On this restoration, by the Reformers of the 16th Century, of the ancient terms, usurped and distorted by Rome, of *Catholicity* and *Orthodoxy*, into the theological and ecclesiastical vocabulary of the Reformation, Paul D. L. Avis has this to say:

The concept of the Church which was fundamental in the thought of the Reformers (including of course Anglicans [and Bullinger]) – namely, that only the gospel was of the *esse* [that is, of the *very being* of the church] – had profound implications for the doctrine of succession and with it the key concept of catholicity, one of the four creedal attributes of the Church. (...) In traditional [Roman] catholic theology, the catholicity of the Church was guaranteed by the apostolic succession through which the grace of holy orders was transmitted and by virtue of the power of orders [the Roman Sacrament of Order] sacramental grace was imparted. By making the gospel alone the power at work in the Church through the Holy Spirit, the reformers did away with the necessity of a doctrine of apostolic succession, replacing it with the notion of the succession of truth. Correspondingly, the gospel of truth was held to be sufficient to secure the catholicity of the Church.⁸⁶

Within the context of such a perspective it becomes clear why the contemporary French, confessionally reformed theologian, Pierre Courthial, Dean *emeritus* of the *Aix-en-Provence Reformed Theological Faculty*, can write:

The Greek word *katholicos* in fact comes from the juxtaposition of two words: *kath* ‘according’ and *holon*, ‘the whole’. If, reduced to its *quantitative* meaning, the word *catholic* signifies either: ‘according to the spatial whole’, or: ‘according to the temporal whole’, that is continual, perpetual, permanent. Thus ‘I believe the catholic Church’

⁸⁵ Archilla, *op. cit.*, p. 172, quoting Bullinger, *Ecclesias evangelicas (...)*, p. 19.

⁸⁶ Paul D. L. Avis, *The Church in the Theology of the Reformers*, John Knox Press, Atlanta, 1981, p. 127-128, quoted in: Archilla, *op. cit.*, p. 196.

then means, either: 'I believe the universality of the Church', or: 'I believe the continuity, the perpetuity, the permanence of the Church'. But this does not represent what is most important or essential. In the *qualitative* sense, which is the principal and first meaning, drawing after it the quantitative, spatial and temporal sense, this word *catholic* signifies 'according to the whole of the normative Revelation which, for the Church, is Holy Scripture'.

And Courthial adds:

To be *catholic*, is to respect the indivisible whole of the text of Scripture, in worship of He who is its first and sovereign Author; it is to refuse to 'choose' in Scripture; it is to refuse heresy (in Greek *airesis* signifies 'choice'; from the verb *airetizo*, in other terms: *heretica*, that is to choose).

Thus the *sola scriptura* (ie the norm, for the Church, is the Scripture alone) must also be accompanied by the *tota scriptura* (ie the norm for the Church is Scripture in its totality.) According to Holy Scripture, not more (*sola*), not less (*tota*). The word to be opposed to *catholic* is the word *heretic*. And vice-versa.⁸⁷

Here Pierre Courthial places himself firmly at the very heart of the heritage of the 16th Century Reformation. He clearly stands in the line of Bullinger, Calvin and Pierre Viret. But I shall close my address with the words of another remarkable, but too little known, theologian who, like Pierre Viret, hails from the *Pays de Vaud* where, by God's grace, I happen myself to live. Richard Paquier, Pastor in the Reformed Church of the Canton de Vaud, wrote in 1935 these challenging words:

To possess the spirit of catholicity, is to wish to be complete and not unilateral; to live a Christianity of an integral character, and not one that is truncated; universal and not sectarian.

To be truly catholic, is to affirm God in his wholeness, Scripture in its totality, the Church in its completeness, the cosmos in its entirety.

It is to believe in the transcendent *and* immanent God, Principle *and* Energy, in the God Three and One, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

It is to confess Christ, God *and* Man and not the mere moral Model, or the mystical Host of the soul, or the Saviour, or the Judge alone.

It is to recognise the Old Testament *and* the New Testament, the latter in its entirety: the Synoptics and John, Paul and James.

⁸⁷ Pierre Courthial, *Le jour des petits recommencements*, L'Age D'Homme, Lausanne, 1998.

It is to be in communion with the church of all the centuries, and not to make the history of the Church start with the Reformation, or, on the contrary, to bring the life of the Church to its close at its mediaeval stage.

It is to be in communion with the Church on earth and that in Heaven, with the Church triumphant just as with the Church militant.

It is to become conscious and see manifest in the sacraments and in the worship of God the harmonious union between spirituality *and* corporeity, between nature *and* the spirit, both in this world and in the world to come.

*Catholicity is the attribute of a complete, total, integral Christianity.*⁸⁸

No doubt the Zurich *Antistes*, Heinrich Bullinger, would have approved of these balanced and ringing words.

⁸⁸ Jean-Marc Berthoud, *Des Actes de l'Eglise. Le Christianisme en Suisse romande*, L'Age D'Homme, Lausanne, 1993, pp 156, 157, quoting Richard Paquier, *Vers la Catholicité Évangélique*, Église et Liturgie, Cahier N° 6, Lausanne, 1935, p. 8.

