

HEINRICH BULLINGER AS THEOLOGIAN: THEMATIC, COMPREHENSIVE, SCHEMATIC¹

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Our title is not Heinrich Bullinger's theology, but Heinrich Bullinger *as theologian*. It is not primarily the what or content of his thought, but the how of it—his method or methods. The two are inseparable, but our chief concern is with the latter: What *kind* of thinker was Bullinger?

Since "Bullinger" is not a household word, or even a classroom word (a short student nap in most courses in church history might cause him to be missed altogether), we cannot assume general knowledge among those present today. Yet there are here also some experts who have written extensively on him. To whom shall I speak? I have decided to speak to both, taking the risk of falling disastrously in between.

Introducing Bullinger

The theological lifework of Heinrich Bullinger of Zurich (1504-1575) spanned the entire Protestant Reformation. When he was born, Luther was twenty-one years old. The 95 Theses appeared when the precocious student Bullinger was thirteen. But already in 1521 Bullinger had rejected the Mass, the pope, and scholastic method, and had begun a decade of active theological work that made him the visible contemporary of Luther, Melancthon, Zwingli, Oecolampadius. Bullinger's work was both derivative and independent, showing originality in some matters that were to mark his entire career. His leading place can hardly be questioned even in this first generation of the Reform, since he was chosen in 1531 at age twenty-seven, upon the death of Zwingli, to be head of the Zurich church, which outside of Lutheranism was the most influential in the emerging Reform. All this, before Calvin, a second generation reformer, had yet been converted to the gospel.

In the next decades Bullinger achieved international influence as churchman, scholar, theologian, and senior advisor to church and political leaders through numerous publications, vast correspondence, and wide personal acquaintance. He lived on beyond the deaths of Melancthon and Calvin, having become not only "the patriarch of Reformed Protestantism" (Egli) but in the third generation participating in the denouement of the Reformed confessional tradition. He was lone author of the most authoritative and comprehensive Reformed confession of faith, and senior colleague and counselor of Calvin's successor, Beza. Bullinger's detailed history of persecution in the church, construed as a mark of orthodoxy, published in 1573, was in recognition of the disastrous St. Bartholomew's Day massacre. Bullinger was the author of well over a hundred published works on all facets of church life and thought, and left behind a correspondence of more than 12,000 items—larger than Luther, Zwingli, and Calvin together. His works appeared in German,

¹The oral form of the delivery of this material at the 1990 Davidson College meeting of the Calvin Colloquium has been retained in this text. Hence, also the documentation is minimal.

Latin, English, Dutch, French, and Hungarian, and some went through more than twenty-five editions before the end of the century.

Among historians there has been a growing awareness of Bullinger's significance and importance. With the completion of Zwingli's works in the *Corpus Reformatorum*, progress is well underway on *Heinrich Bullinger Werke*, to contain selected titles and the entire letter collection. The secondary literature about Bullinger from the sixteenth century to the present, surveyed by Herkenrath in 1978, lists more than 2,000 items, 40% of which date from 1940 and after. Bullinger is given increasing recognition in encyclopaedic works, such as Andresen's *Handbuch der Dogmen- und Theologiegeschichte*, and the new *Theologische Realenzyklopaedie* and various surveys of Reformation history and theology, and plays a larger role than ever before in such general histories of doctrine as that of Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition*, vol. 4. Solid monographs have appeared that investigate special areas of his activity and thought.

Yet Bullinger remains the least known of the major Reformers. Probably he will never be a name of wide popular recognition. He seems to lack the penetrating intellectual and literary brilliance of a Calvin and the originating genius and heroic style of a Zwingli. Even in church history we seem to prefer our heroes to be Achilles rather than Nestor. And Bullinger was Nestor, without whom the work of his predecessor might not have lasted. Bullinger's tireless contribution over more than five decades of leadership makes him the last of that remarkable era that may claim the honorable title of Reformer of the church.

Characteristics of Bullinger as Theologian Generally Recognized

In both the older and the more recent Bullinger interpretation, four commonplaces have persisted. Always he has borne the sobriquet "Zwingli's successor," and this has frequently been the point of departure for study of his work. In addition, there is an increasing awareness of the genuine independence and originality with which he marked the Reformed tradition in eastern Europe, in Germany and Holland, and in Anglo-Saxon Puritanism. Secondly, Bullinger has been long designated as one of the originators of the covenant idea as of dominant import both in the church and theology, and in political federalism. Thirdly, he is increasingly recognized as important for biblical interpretation, both in the 1520s (where his work has been extensively studied by Staektke, Haussammann, and vom Berg), and throughout the century through his widely distributed Latin commentaries and sermons. Finally, Bullinger's contributions to the doctrine of the sacraments have been seen as both formative and unifying for the Reformed tradition, and formidable in polemic, especially against Lutheranism. His joint work with Calvin on the Lord's Supper in the *Consensus Tigurinus* held the Reformed branch of the Reformation together.

In the course of the foregoing common opinions there has also been more or less general agreement that Bullinger's theology may be characterized as (1) biblical in root, (2) orthodox and catholic in intent, (3) dominated by practical, churchly motifs in expression, (4) historical in its conceptuality, and (5) comprehensive in scope. Somewhat more fully: (1) Bullinger's doctrine of the Word shows strong preference for the viva vox as passed along by the patriarchs, before finally being written down—by inspiration of the Spirit—the latter, however, for the guidance of preaching in the living voice in the church where "the preaching of the Word of God is the Word of God." Bullinger was also, throughout his career as interpreter of the scriptures, a thorough humanist in grammatico-historical treatment of the text. (2) Bullinger's intent to be orthodox and catholic is evident in his

assurance that he speaks with and for the whole history of the true church, against the eight hundred years of canonized novelties which Rome had imposed. Bullinger prefixes twelve ancient documents to the *Decades* in the conviction that anyone who looks will understand that the Protestant faith is the doctrine of all, derived from the Word of God, supported by the fathers and councils. Perhaps the clearest and most amusing sign of this claim is seen in the title given in 1624 to the English translation of *Der Alte Glaube*: "Look from Adam and behold the Protestants' faith . . ." (3) The practicality of Bullinger's teaching is twofold: negatively it is wholly non-speculative in intent, and positively his thought lives wholly within and on behalf of the historical and daily life of the church. There is no private virtuoso theology in Bullinger, and no theological or spiritual or other soliloquy. This feature is of special significance to the ad hoc character of most of his writing, and the rhetorical determination of appropriate writing style and organization of his material. More of this in a moment. (4) History seems to be the most natural *metier* of Bullinger's mind. Sequence, chronology, facts of background, the movement from origins to the present play a large role in his apologetic, his polemic, and his conception of what is "orthodox and catholic." At the same time, he has been said to have a platonically tinted apprehension of history in which no real development takes place. The substance of faith and of the covenant are the same from the "first basic gospel" of Genesis 3:15 to the end of time. (5) Throughout his theological life work, Bullinger saw the biblical revelation and the teaching and practice that arose therefrom in the various circumstances of history as a comprehensive whole. While he developed many individual themes in various ways, his thought was never, from the earliest times, piecemeal, but conceived as a part or aspect of the whole. In this matter, we shall raise several questions as the present address proceeds.

Contemporary Characterizations of Bullinger as a Theologian

Implicit in the foregoing is the question of what *kind* of theologian Bullinger is. Several writings of the past twenty years have offered significant comment on this matter. The weightiest of these is the very detailed and heavily documented study of the Second Helvetic Confession by Ernst Koch, *Die Theologie der Confessio Helvetica Posterior* (1968), which has been called by Wilhelm Neuser "a veritable textbook of Bullinger's theology." And so it is. Not only is every aspect of the Confession meticulously analyzed, but through wide reading in about seventy other Bullinger titles, each element of the Confession is seen as dealt with in others of Bullinger's published works. All this is founded on careful textual work, noting Bullinger's own emendations in his original manuscript and their significance.

While professing not to characterize Bullinger's theology as a whole, but to produce only what is called for by the theology of this one document, Koch nonetheless argues, against certain other Bullinger specialists, "that Heinrich Bullinger was a really systematic thinker, and that the *Confessio Helvetica Posterior* is a really systematic writing." Koch warns that some others who see Bullinger as a "mediating theologian and a man of praxis," run the danger "of overlooking the fact that Bullinger's theology is a systematic whole, and as such offers a thoroughly self-contained, independent achievement." He holds that the *Confessio* "as a systematic writing may rightly be taken as a summary recapitulation of Bullinger's theology." And "the *Confessio Helvetica Posterior* takes its place as a dogmatic work of magnificent completeness and impressive theological consistency." At the same time Koch insists that he is not making an effort "to present the individual chapters of the Confession as systematically deducible elements of a higher concept."

Koch does, however, despite his own disavowals, characterize Bullinger's theology as a whole: "Bullingers Theologie ist Foederaltheologie." He insists upon "the constitutive

significance of the covenant concept for Bullinger's theological thought structure." "The covenant conception in the entire fullness of its possibilities for expression and ramification is . . . the symbol of the inclusive conception of Bullinger's entire theology." Koch thus forms a judgment that goes beyond his stated purpose, and crosses the limits of his professed method. Koch here resembles certain other Bullinger specialists (Gooszen, Van t'Hooft, and to a degree Staedtke), who find in the covenant the "golden thread" that can be traced through his thought. But Koch is first and almost alone in insisting that the complete systematic coherence of the *Confessio* has its key in the covenant concept, although that concept is all but totally absent from the document. The term *foedus* appears once as a synonym for *testamentum*, and it appears four more times within the brief compass of the doctrine concerning baptism, the sign of the covenant. That is all. Koch does not derive the doctrine from the Confession itself. That would be a total impossibility. Rather, he writes a long excursus on the "Concept of the Covenant according to Heinrich Bullinger" (388-399). Here he ranges widely through Bullinger's exegetical and other works and offers a thorough presentation of Bullinger's teaching, none of which comes from the Second Helvetic Confession. "It is not of decisive significance that the *concept* of the covenant is relatively seldom used(!). The analysis of the theology of the Confession itself, both in single parts and in its entire conception, has led by a compelling inner logic to this concept and its structure."

It would seem that this "inner logic" has compelled only Professor Koch—not Bullinger himself. This "inner logic" has led to a serious overinterpretation. It causes Professor Koch to rearrange the chapters into his own original order to expose the covenant structure. Thus the chapter sequence in his soteriology was originally xi, xvi, vi, x. (After criticism of his dissertation, for publication, he removed vi and x [providence and predestination] from soteriology to the doctrine of God with the following sequence: iii, vi, vii, viii, x, xi, xii. The argument, however, did not change.). The "inner logic" also leads Professor Koch to engage in a tortuous process of finding covenant elements and structure throughout. The proper procedure here should not be to fit the parts of the confession into a structure which is simply not there—however impressive it may be elsewhere in Bullinger's thought—but to expose the actual contents of the document and appreciate the structure that is actually present. What Koch's method proves at most is that the teaching of the Confession does not contradict Bullinger's covenant scheme as elsewhere presented—which in any case, one would not expect.

The problem remains: why did Bullinger *not* use a covenant scheme in the Second Helvetic Confession, if he is a truly systematic theologian and the key to his thought is the covenant? To interpret a Bullinger writing in this way, as if, since he is allegedly a systematist, his work must be a tightly constructed whole and dominated by a single principle, may be to miss his character as a thinker. At best, it reads implications drawn by the researcher back into the work of Bullinger, where he, himself, did not do so.

I have two other caveats: Despite close attention to an immense amount of primary material and secondary interpretation, Koch has made one or two mistakes in reading Bullinger that are important for his thesis. (1) One is that he speaks of an "Adamic" covenant in Bullinger that lays the groundwork for a "supralapsarian covenant of creation." There is no such thing. The "Adamic" covenant of Bullinger is based on his reading of Genesis 3:15, the so-called Protoevangelion, whereby the announcement of salvation to Adam *after* the Fall is read as the first announcement of the covenant. This is, in any case, a covenant of *salvation*, not creation. (2) Koch wrenches the matter further when he speaks of the "original relation of God and humanity" as the "true reflection of the relationship of covenant God and covenant partner" consisting of command and obedience. This procedure

gives a "legalistic-ethical" tone to his whole theology. Bullinger, however, never extrapolates the covenant concept into the order of creation, any more than did Calvin. This came later and constituted probably the decisive element of what may properly be called the Federal theology. When that step was made a covenant *system* was underway that could embrace all aspects of the God-man relationship, including finally with Cocceius, the reading of predestination as a covenant of redemption. Bullinger was certainly a forerunner of these important streams of thought, but he himself did not go so far—most especially not in the Second Helvetic Confession. Our continuing question is why he did not.

Koch's thesis that the covenant doctrine is the systematic key to the Second Helvetic Confession is (surprisingly to me) taken up by an old master of Swiss Reformed theology, Gottfried Locher. In his contribution to the jubilee book for the 400th anniversary of the Second Helvetic, his assignment is to treat "the doctrine of the Holy Spirit." Locher writes, "E. Koch shows convincingly that the eternal covenant belongs to the basic concepts of Bullinger's Confession, even though the expression is seldom mentioned." Then Locher proceeds so as to identify the doctrine of the Spirit with that of the covenant.

It appears more and more that "Covenant" and "Spirit" not only balance one another or merely supplement one another, but that we must recognize a certain identity of the two . . . Both lines of expression are numerous enough to present and explain one another. The Spirit lives in the Covenant, or the Covenant lives from the Spirit.

Mirabile dictu—Covenant, though practically absent from the Second Helvetic Confession, is present under the code-word "Spirit"! I would be the first to agree that Locher's motive is certainly correct: that is, to read the Spirit's work in the community which is the church, and through Christ—and not privately in individual souls. The Second Helvetic is not a document of pietism: agreed. But Bullinger himself makes this vividly clear from beginning to end—and he does so *without* using the term or idea of covenant to explain what he means by Spirit! We should not do it for him.

Again, our solution should not be to smuggle the covenant into the Second Helvetic Confession. Our very real problem is to find out what it means that after about forty years of reflection, of preaching, of teaching, and of writing—which included about a dozen full, formal, comprehensive presentations of his theological thought—Bullinger's masterpiece, the *Confessio Helvetica Posterior*, does not contain a doctrine that he from time to time elsewhere called the *scopus Scripturae*, and *scopus legis, prophetarum, et apostolorum*.

J. Wayne Baker, in *Heinrich Bullinger and the Covenant* (1980), begins by focusing narrowly on covenant material in Bullinger's earliest period and finds that "Bullinger's *De Scripturae negotio* of November 30, 1523, contains important background for his later covenant idea, although it does not treat of the covenant per se" (4). But in *Von dem Touff*, of November 10, 1525, "Bullinger had expressed all the elements of his fully developed covenant theology." Although this may be "perhaps . . . too early to call Bullinger a covenant theologian, unquestionably the covenant became the first principle of his theology in the next two years" (9-10). And finally his *Answer to Burchard* demonstrates that by early 1527 the covenant had become the key interpretive motif of Bullinger's theology, the principal formative and organizing factor in his thought" (14, 48). Although a mosaic of Bullinger materials thus assembled seems to make Baker's point, we shall see below that a broader survey of Bullinger's thought shows not only that this judgment is premature, but possibly that Bullinger in his entire theological lifework never had a single "principal formative and organizing factor." Certainly neither Staedtke nor Haussammann, working

with these same early writings, reaches such a conclusion. And Ernst Koch, who agrees, as we have seen, that at a later period the covenant is such a key for Bullinger, cannot go all the way with Baker. In an admiring review of Baker's book, he suggests gently that "the author presents his view singlemindedly, clearly, and almost simplistically, and draws unbroken lines in theological history. On this issue the question arises if it is not *too* unbroken" (*TLZ*, 1984, col. 44). My own suggestion is that it may be Baker's consuming interest in both theological and political federalism that leads him to be less concerned with the problems of Bullinger's thought as a whole, and overly concentrated on a single theme of subsequent great influence. Our problem remains: given these grounds for a covenant program, early and late, why did Bullinger *not* develop such a theology in his principle comprehensive writings?

Professor Wilhelm Neuser in the *Handbuch der Dogmen- und Theologiegeschichte*, takes another tack. He, too, regards the *Second Helvetic Confession* as a "comprehensive summary of Bullinger's theology" (235), and uses the Confession as an outline for presenting Bullinger's thought, even though its "systematic structure is a matter of controversy," and even though "the covenant theology, which is typical of Bullinger's other writings, is here missing" (225). Accepting the warning not to reorganize the *Second Helvetic* as Koch did, or to reduce everything to a single systematic method, he offers a different type of clue.

Bullinger's systematic method is easy to demonstrate when one compares the sequence of chapter titles of the dogmatic writings that Koch presents in his diagrammatic overview. The special character of the systematic method, and beyond this, of the theology of Bullinger, becomes clear: the God concept and the Christology are interchangeable (*austauschbar*) (pp. 226, 230, and also p. 229). That means the doctrine of God already contains the soteriology, and the Christology merely extends the general doctrine of God. On this basis in the *Decades* (1549-51) he can begin the first part with faith, justification, Apostles' Creed, love, law, magistracy, and good works, and then follow in the second part with creation, providence, predestination, and Christology. Also in the *Catecheses pro Adultioribus* of 1559, creation is handled first in Christology. In other writings, Christology and justification/salvation are found at the beginning in the doctrine of creation and providence. The confusing variety finds its solution in the continuing situation that Christology and soteriology are only extensions of the God concept.

The *Second Helvetic Confession* is thus a typical production of the Bullingerian theology, even though the covenant theology is not presented and worked out here. It bears the distinguishing marks of Bullinger's systematic work: 1. At the beginning stands a detailed hermeneutic reflection concerning Holy Scripture. 2. The general doctrine of God is completed by special Christological and pneumatological statements. 3. God's activity in Holy History is always the same and good; Old and New Covenant have the same content.

The observations, in my view—with the exception of that concerning *Catechesis*—are externally correct, but very serious problems remain, as follows: 1. This analysis simply leaves the covenant concept stranded. It becomes marginal to Bullinger's systematic work, and in fact plays no further role in Neuser's presentation. Having criticized Koch for an exaggerated effort to make the covenant a systematic key to unlock the *Second Helvetic* and Bullinger's theology in general, I now criticize Neuser for dropping it altogether.

2. Neuser takes Koch's diagrammatic overview too much at face value, as if all these writings were sufficiently analyzed by a comparative survey of their chapter titles. Just one example: there is no way to tell from Koch's display that the *Wahrhaftes Bekenntnis* of 1545 is organized throughout, not by Bullinger's personal method, but by the traditional twelve articles of the Apostles' Creed.

Neuser's whole approach fails to deal with the special character of the various writings. Particularly it ignores the purpose and the audience to which each was directed, and the effects this may have had on the "systematic" method as revealed in the sequence of topics.

3. Neuser's most serious and fruitful suggestion—repeated several times, as we have just seen—is that the God concept and the Christology are "exchangeable" or "interchangeable." If this means merely a matter of the external sequence of subject matter, it is certainly a right observation in a comparison of the *Decades* and the *Second Helvetic Confession*. But is this more than a matter of what the later scholastic orthodox thinkers referred to as the *ordo essendi* and the *ordo cognoscendi*—always posing viable alternatives to any Christian theologian? I suspect the formal problem here represented was not decided by Bullinger on formal, systematic grounds, but was based on several other considerations out of which he evolved a scheme (for want of a better word, and avoiding the term system) for each of the writings. These other considerations might be polemic, didactic, confessional, traditional, even homiletic, and require close analysis of all his comprehensive presentations of doctrine.

The article by Fritz Buesser in the *Theologische Realenzyklopaedie* (7:375-387), divides Bullinger's theological lifework into three successive phases, the third of which begins with the *Decades* (1549-51) and includes both the *Summa* (1556) and the *Confessio Helvetica Posterior* (1561-66). Buesser characterizes the latter period with Koch and Locher as a "systematic unfolding of the covenant concept ensconced in the *Second Helvetic Confession*," then notes objections that have been offered "on good grounds" (Dowey) to this way of understanding. He concludes "all in all this survey shows clearly that a comprehensive overview of Bullinger's theology in its historic development, now as formerly, is lacking." And he predicts that many more monographs on the most important *loci* must be written before such a comprehensive whole will be possible.

Certainly the latter evaluation is correct. Nonetheless, the matter may be not quite so indecisive if Bullinger's ad hoc rhetorically accommodated schemata are taken more seriously than heretofore.

An Alternative Approach to Understanding Bullinger's Theological Method

Among Bullinger's numerous theological works there are, broadly speaking, three major types especially relevant to our investigation: (1) biblical commentary; (2) thematic and polemic treatises; and (3) comprehensive presentations spanning the whole territory of Christian theology. The latter, for specific reasons that will emerge, I refrain from calling "systematic" works.

As to the first, biblical works, these consist of commentaries and sermons (*conciones*). Bullinger had commented both on Gospels (Matthew, John, and Luke), and the Acts and epistles (especially Romans and Hebrews) in publicly delivered lectures in

German (1525-27) while still a young schoolmaster in Kappel. In the 1530s he brought out singly, then all together in a folio that was to go through twelve editions, Latin commentaries on the epistles. Then in the 1540s he published expanded folio size Latin commentaries on each of the Gospels. We should also include here several hundred of Bullinger's published sermons, e.g., on Jeremiah (1557), Revelation (1537), Daniel (1565), and Isaiah (1567), as biblical commentary, because he always worked from exegesis of a text, and characteristically in sequence, *lectio continua*. These biblical works, while indubitably basic in revealing the mind and the method of Bullinger, will not be discussed today. Bullinger's profile as a constructive thinker does not emerge so clearly in these writings because he necessarily follows the sequence and disposition of the biblical material.

Thematic and Polemic Treatises of the 1530s

In this brief presentation, we shall get a more advanced picture of how Bullinger constructed his theology if we look at the second and third categories mentioned above: thematic and comprehensive theological works. It is difficult to know which to place first, because Bullinger was concerned with the whole as well as the parts from the very beginning. Arbitrarily, then, we turn first to a selection of five thematic and polemic treatises of the 1530s—all written after he had become head of the Zurich church, although foreshadowed in the Kappel years.

The treatises mentioned here with thumbnail descriptions show the biblical, catholic and orthodox, and historical elements of Bullinger's thought in his own idiom and plan. These writings can be characterized as thematic in two senses: They carry through biblical historical themes, and also life-long motifs of Bullinger's thought.

1. *On the Only and Eternal Covenant . . .* (1534). This is one of Bullinger's most famous and influential works, called by Gottlob Schrenk the first use in theological history of the covenant idea as a "constitutive dogmatic principle." The thesis is in the title: that there is in essence *one* covenant between God and the human race and that the twoness of "old" and "new" covenants concerns only accidental and historical variety; that various abrogations of ceremonial, civic, or political elements do not affect the fundamental definition, conditions, or eternal duration of the covenant. This covenant is the summary and scope of all Scripture. The polemic point is chiefly against the Baptists' denigration of the value of the Old Testament in the Christian era. By contrast Bullinger holds that the true Christian faith is not merely a few hundred years old, but 6,733 years! Formally, this orderly, careful treatise shows that Bullinger knows how to build an argument from philologically based definitions through the gathering and ordering of biblical and other material to a summary epilogue. Bullinger reprinted this treatise in all the large folio editions of the commentaries on the epistles, together with #3 below. The Latin text is basic. Translations were made into German and Dutch.

2. *The Old Faith* (1537). The same basic theme that makes up the epilogue of *De Testamento* now appears developed with scant mention of the covenant as such under the rubric of "faith"—this time with pointed polemic against the Roman church's argument that the Protestant Reformation was introducing a novel and heretical faith. Against this Bullinger argues that "our first Christian parents," Adam and Eve, "from the beginning of the world" (more precisely, from the announcement of "the blessed seed" in Genesis 3:15) knew Christ and held the same faith as all patriarchs, prophets, "pious kings," and apostles—and of course the sixteenth century reformers. Translated into English by Miles Coverdale and published without mention of Bullinger, this German treatise is even more

single-minded than *De Testamento*, although less technical and more eloquent. The stated purpose was to comfort and strengthen people troubled by the alleged novelty of the Reformation faith, a strongly pastoral concern.

Bullinger in the *Decades* specifically links these two treatises as dealing with a common theme.

3. *Orthodox Statement on both of the two Natures in Christ . . .* (1534). Bullinger's first detailed presentation of Christology, written in Latin and never translated, was published, after the first edition, with the folio volumes of Pauline and "canonical" epistles (Staedtke #84-88 and 91-95). This is a distinction it shares with *De Testamento*, written the same year. Its chief feature is the defense of the catholic and orthodox Christology of the early councils and fathers, solely from the Bible, and not on the basis of any intrinsic or ecclesiastical authority. He holds throughout for the simplicity of the doctrine itself, and attributes to various human vices the attacks from the beginning of heretical distortions and perversions. Delivered as an address on the holiday of Zurich's early martyrs, Felix and Regula, the subject matter was chosen to fight the errors of Claudius of Savoy, who confused the two natures. There is much presentation of creedal and patristic texts, then errors, respectively on the deity, the humanity, and the unity of the natures. While Bullinger's constructive arguments are rigorously biblical, he defends the use of non-biblical terms (*vocabula nova in religionis negotia*) to protect Scripture from heretics, as Calvin did also at a later date.

4. *On the Authority of Holy Scripture . . .* (1538) was dedicated to Henry VIII. It is a long treatise in two books, and Bullinger's classic statement (later built into the *Decades*) on the sole authority of the Word over all traditions not found in it. Whether in oral form (the patriarchs) or written form (Scripture) or subsequently as preached in the living voice, the Word is one and the same Word. Bullinger's biblical, patristic, and classical learning are displayed in a fulsome way to show that pagan philosophy is all more recent than Scripture, that the word found in Scripture created the church, and not vice versa, that Scripture is perfect in fulfilling all needs for the worship of God and living the Christian life. It is "the oldest and most perfect philosophy," adequate against the superstitions and tyranny of the Roman "antistes." So far as I have been able to discern there is no mention of the covenant in this long and many-sided defense, even at several places, such as Bullinger's dealing with the law and aspects of the law that are passing in contrast to those that are eternal, where his usual covenant arguments would seem to be called for.

5. *On the Origin of Errors . . .* (1539) After two much shorter works of this title (1526, 1529), Bullinger greatly lengthened this material to a large volume that was to appear in translation in French, German, and Dutch. In Book I (36 chapters), Bullinger occupies himself, after six chapters on a true doctrine of God (including covenant teaching in chapters 4 and 6) largely with errors of worship. First come the superstition and errors of pagans (chapters 7-10), then errors of Jews (chapters 10-11), then the errors of Christians (to the end of the book) in matters of idolatry, invocation of the saints, and so on. Book II is devoted wholly to errors of the papal mass. Polytheism, following Lactantius, is the root of all these errors, and its equivalent, the corruptions of true worship whether outside of Christianity or within it.

These treatises, just quickly sketched, could be supplemented by others from the same period. In each case Bullinger was defending the same thing: the single, simple, perfect Word of God, known from the beginning of human history. But in each there was a specific polemic target at which he took aim, and an appropriate selection of material and

style. The contents of each of these is to turn up again in the *Decades*, sometimes almost verbatim, and in other comprehensive works in much reduced form, and with greater selectivity. Bullinger is unquestionably repetitious and sometimes boring, and he rearranges his ideas frequently and painlessly, and to suit particular purposes. As we turn now to several comprehensive writings we will see that there appears to be no such theological agony as when Calvin struggles with himself about how to say two things at once, then puts the "second" before the "first" in order that no reader can think the first (justification) can be stated without the second (regeneration) in the *Institutes*, 3.6.1. Nonetheless, Bullinger is not careless, hit or miss, or unpredictable. And he has given the impression to many that he is quite systematic. He is a massively conservative intellect, inwardly at peace with Christian truth. His problems do not seem to be within himself but are problems of arranging and accommodating the ancient truth, as needed for the church in various places and situations. We shall now observe this process as it appears in another genre of his writing.

Comprehensive Works

This third category of Bullinger titles may be considered "programmatic and theologically comprehensive," that is, writings that treat all or nearly all theological topics within a single work. All who study Bullinger have profited from Ernst Koch's diagrammatic and comparative overview of these *Gesamtdarstellungen*, which is printed as a large fold-out page in his volume discussed above. Koch lists nine works and prints their chapter titles in parallel columns. I would list only eight works in this category, deleting two of Koch's choices and adding one that he decided against, for reasons that, I think, come from digging deeper than the apparent sequence, which is sometimes misleading. For the present illustration of problems that arise among these works, I choose to present a brief analytic comment on each of six such works, one of which is not in Koch's table. The dates of these presentations are both earlier and later than the thematic treatises discussed above, which manifests Bullinger's awareness of the whole of theology from early to late in his career; they are not a late development.

The thesis of the following brief survey—stated in advance to put you on your guard—is that Bullinger's thought cannot be reduced to a single "systematic" method. Indeed, no one of his own comprehensive theological works can serve as an adequate structure on which to arrange a synoptic presentation of his thought. Further, that the program of treatment of the themes, which in content remain fairly constant across the years, is determined more by the particular purpose of a given writing (broadly, a rhetorical accommodation) than by working out from within the interrelation of biblical themes throughout a life-long systematic interest.

The following selection deals with two sketches from his early years as Kappel schoolmaster and Bremgarten pastor, one full-bodied confession which is written for the defense of the Zurich theology by the Antistes, following the treatises presented above and embodying or ignoring variously their content. And finally we present three works that are unquestionably on any list of his masterpieces of theology.

1. *Loci Communes Sacri* (1527). The first comprehensive sketch of the whole field of theology by Heinrich Bullinger appears as part of his conception of a program for the education of theological students, in his *Ratio Studiorum* (1527), while he was still schoolmaster in Kappel. Part II of the *Ratio* on biblical and theological studies (following a first part containing detailed classical propaedeutic) contains chapters on biblical

interpretation, the main work of the preacher. To this is attached *Loci Communes Sacri*, which is an undifferentiated list of the titles, one to six words each, of well over 250 theological topics. Bullinger says he had composed the list three years earlier—that would be at the age of nineteen! Although sometimes unclear in detail, these topics can readily be seen to be made up of about fifteen major groups of subjects, opening dramatically with ten items on the "only and eternal covenant" (testamentum), already called the *scopus* or main theme of Scripture, in the preceding chapters. We must forego detailed analysis of this fascinating melange recently edited in two volumes by Peter Stotz, opting only for some conclusions related to the interests of this lecture.

Bullinger himself did not see fit to publish this early and somewhat inchoate (albeit influential) work, which was nonetheless significant in showing (1) the breadth and comprehensiveness of Bullinger's theological 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, to characterize his later work. 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 the Christian life and its perils. At the same time certain anomalies of placement (sin and anthropology separated, odd intermixture of positive and negative elements) and some tendency to miscellaneousness, as well as difficult or non-existent transitions, show this to be far from a carefully articulated systematic effort.

2. *Institutionum* (1531). Among the unpublished Bullinger papers in the Zentralbibliothek Zurich is a handwritten outline sketch of a complete "philosophia Christiana," dated 1531. It was prepared most likely in the months before the pastor in Bremgarten fled to Zurich and became Zwingli's successor. This is seven years after the *Loci Communes Sacri*, and is a much more carefully articulated list than that. In this case Bullinger was evidently projecting a comprehensive theological work of his own, with no indication of any particular educational or polemic function. Since fulfillment was to wait until the *Decades*, 1549-51, it is highly significant to have a sketch of his early interest in such a project. The whole is divided into twelve books, each with a title, and each book divided in ten to eighteen chapters. Since the document is unknown, it might be well to read quickly the titles of the twelve books:

I	On the Absolute Necessity of Scripture
II	On the Nature of God and his Majesty
III	On Law, Sin, and Grace
IV	On Jesus Christ our Lord
V	On the Holy Church of God
VI	On True Religion and the True Worship of God
VII	On the Sacraments
VIII	On the Discipline of Christians
IX	On the Righteousness of Faith and Christian Virtue
X	On the Resurrection and Eternal Life
XI	On the Kingdom and Errors of Antichrist
XII	On Heretics and Heresies

Notably this disposition, by contrast with the *Loci*, gives no programmatic or systematic role to the doctrine of the covenant, just three years before the writing of *De Testamento*. The covenant appears only once in the entire outline as the title of chapter 10

of Book I on Scripture. Except for this very important matter of both content and form, and the heaping of polemic elements in Books XI and XII, the *Institutionum* bears some resemblance to the grouping and sequence of materials in the *Summa*, more than to other comprehensive writings, but with no such covenant doctrine as we will find there.

3. *Warhaffte Bekanntnuss* (1545). This document is a reply from the Zurich ministers collectively (written entirely, however, by Bullinger) to Luther's vitriolic attack on the Zurich church as heretical, chiefly aimed at the Zurich teaching about the sacraments. The reply also deals with the sacraments, but the opening unit of Part II is a complete Confession of Faith meant to demonstrate that Zurich follows the "true, old, indubitable" faith, and is "not Zwinglian, nor Oecolampadian, much less Lutheran," but merely Christian, depending wholly on Scripture, "in which we find no straw," and the "true, plain, apostolic teaching."

The Confession begins with Scripture in the Bullinger manner (authority, interpretation, rejection of human traditions), inspired (yngeben) by the Holy Spirit and "has of and in itself authority, respect, trust, strength, truth, esteem, and perfection enough," and needs no authentication by men or church. From Scripture arises the apostolic teaching of the creed. For our present purposes, two remarks seem apposite: (1) The claim of antiquity and orthodoxy here is biblical and patristic, not Adamic, as in *Der Alte Glaube* with its exaggerated treatment of Genesis 3:15; and (2) the covenant teaching of *De Testamento* is totally absent! Faith is briefly mentioned. After this one subject—Scripture—the entire remainder of the confession of faith is an exposition of the traditionally designated twelve articles of the Apostles Creed. Although Bullinger includes analysis of the Creed in the *Decades*, the *Summa*, and the *Catechesis pro Adultioribus*, and showered upon it unmeasured praise, this treatment is notable because it is the only instance in which he followed the twelve-article scheme for a general presentation of the entire Christian faith. A detailed analysis for which there is no time today shows fascinating idiosyncratic treatment of these points, including a full Nicene-Chalcedonian orthodoxy, a doctrine of original sin, an attack on purgatory and monasticism, defense of the perpetual virginity of Mary, a recital of some deeds from Christ's ministry, and an ethic of faithful good works—the last of these remarkably placed under the Last Judgment. Notable also is the comparative lengths of certain sections. Some doctrines, such as the triune God, are only half an octavo page in length, and others, such as the Ascension to the Right Hand of the Father and the Return to Judgment, receive three pages each. The swelling of the latter two represents the elaboration of his polemic point against Luther's doctrine of ubiquity. The ingenuous freedom by which Bullinger does almost whatever he wants within and in addition to the Creed structure makes it all the more remarkable that the author of the *Loci* of 1524 (from the *Ratio* of 1527) and the famous *De Testamento* (1534, and repeatedly published with his commentary on the Epistles), in both of which the covenant is the chief theme of Scripture, here makes no mention of the covenant at all. What kind of systematician is this? Although the data cannot be presented within our present sketch, I think it is demonstrable that this document is primarily a polemic program to which the covenant does not contribute. The creedal sequence is not "systematic" but "schematic"—arranged for other purposes than to display how various doctrines hold together cogently.

Sermonum Decades (1549-1551). 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. This material is presented in the form of fifty Latin "sermons to clergy," in a style quite different from Bullinger's regular vernacular preaching,

and was most probably delivered at the Zurich *Prophezei* to the teachers and pastors of the city. The *Decades* was probably the chief avenue of Bullinger's influence until the time of the Synod of Dort. The title comes from the classification of the work into five groups of ten sermons each, hence "decades." This plan is curiously irrelevant to the actual disposition of the subject matter. Only one Decade, the fifth, actually corresponds to a major transition in subject matter. German and Dutch translators simply abandoned Bullinger's own title for the work, and called it the *Hausbuch*, printing the sermons, each with its own title, in a sequence numbered one to fifty.

"Hausbuch" implies a lay dogmatic for home use, and Holweg shows that it was widely disseminated and read as such. The individual sermons were also sometimes read on Sunday at public worship—against Bullinger's expressed wish, when no ordained preacher was present, e.g., on ship board, or served as sermons for those unable to attend church.

We offer here an analysis based on the actual disposition of the subject matter, but retaining Bullinger's enumeration into decades (capital Roman numerals) and sermons (lower case Roman numerals). After the dedicatory epistle, there appear to be four major divisions:

- I Ancient Catholic Doctrine (12 documents from the early church)
- II Soteriology (I.i-IV.ii)
- III God and Creation (IV.iii-x)
- IV Church and Sacraments (V.i-x)

The twelve ancient documents of Part I and the accompanying explanations for their choice represent Bullinger's consistent claim to be "ancient and orthodox" and are essential to the *Decades*, not merely prefatory matter. Part II is an impressive development of the major themes of Reformation theology, no less catholic (i.e., biblical) than the former for Bullinger: the Word of God as Scripture, Faith, Justification, Love which is the fulfilling of the Law (long Decalogue analysis), the Law's uses, culminating in the Gospel as Christian Liberty, and the Doctrines of Sin and Evangelical Repentance. The sequence Faith and Love reflects Bullinger's two Augustinian principles of biblical interpretation.

Part III is marked with an inserted dedicatory epistle to Edward VI and a review of what has preceded. Then, "since we are now come to the end of these former parts," he gives a preview of what is to follow. It presents almost a new beginning to the work: the doctrine of the knowledge of God and true worship, the Trinity, and the Father's Creation, Providence, Predestination, the Son, and the Spirit, followed by Good and Evil Spirits and a doctrine of Man. Part IV is the Church, including Ministry, Prayer, the Sacraments and miscellaneous church practices.

Embedded in this four-part sequence are the familiar catechetical elements: the Apostles Creed, three sermons under Faith (I.vii-ix); the Decalogue, thirteen sermons under Love and Law (II.ii-III.viii); the Lord's Prayer, one sermon under Church (V.v); and the Sacraments, four sermons under Church (V.vi-ix). These elements are the cause of some repetition in the general disposition, e.g., Christology. Although it may be materially irrelevant, the reader is struck that the sermons increase considerably in bulk with each succeeding decade, from the first, which covers 70 pages in a Latin folio edition, to the fifth, which occupies 234 of these pages.

This brief summary of so extensive and many-sided a work as the *Decades* cannot adequately reflect its content, but for our present purposes it will have to suffice. Thanks

to an English translation in the Parker Society publications, it is available in most theological libraries.

As noted, the printing of ancient documents in Part I is part of the unrelenting motif of Bullinger to show that the Reformed faith is that of the primitive and early church, through Nicea and Chalcedon, and that furthermore the early fathers and these great councils all *appealed to Scripture*. He does not merely set out the early texts, but writes a brief introductory account of why he chose material from the Four General Synods or Councils, rather, e.g., than from the six cited by the Venerable Bede. And in sections on Ephesus and Chalcedon, in addition to what is quoted and in explanation of it, Bullinger adds some comments and makes some selections from Cyril. He does not, however, explain his further choice from the First and Fourth. There will be further comments on the in the next section of this address.

Summa Christenlicher Religion (1556). Bullinger's *Summa* was published five years after completion of the *Decades* and called by him an "epitome" of the former work, following persistent requests that he provide briefer, more accessible instruction for the adult layperson. "Summa" (sometimes Summe) is here a German, not a Latin, term, fully naturalized on all levels of German by the year 1500, meaning a brief summation of essential material. So we are not to expect an extended medieval *summa theologiae*. When this vigorous German work was translated into Latin it was titled *Compendium*. Bullinger has one goal: "a summary of the Christian religion in which we present briefly and correctly, without wrangling and scolding, such matters drawn from Holy Scriptures as are necessary for every single Christian to know, believe, do, and allow, and also to suffer and to die in blessedness." It advertises also on the same title page that this material includes short explanations of the Decalogue, Creed, Lord's Prayer, and Sacraments. Here was an opportunity for the adult to recall catechism instruction and advance to necessary and appropriate maturity. The book was to be studied, Bible in hand, for which reason Bullinger gives many biblical references but few completely quoted texts.

The title page, the sharply stated index, the dedicatory epistle (including instructions on "How to read this book"), and a summary of the summary in bold type at the beginning of each of the ten articles show this book wholly dominated by a pastoral and practical didactic purpose of which the chief virtue would be simplicity. It would stay away from the disputes among the learned which so often confuse good people. The point of departure in the opening chapters illustrates admirably how Bullinger's practical purpose controls the material.

The first subject matter is the vernacular Bible in one's hand. Now forty years after Luther's 95 Theses, the readiest point of contact with the Protestant lay believer is the Book and the names commonly used to describe it. Reversing the order of the *Decades*, which begins with God's word, or revelation, and proceeds through a described historical process to Moses, who first wrote it down, Bullinger now begins with what is at hand, a written document. First comes the common term writing (*Schriff*t), in this case distinguished by two adjectives: (1) "Holy" because this writing is inspired by the Holy Spirit, intended for a Holy people, leads toward a Holy God, and contains only Holiness—no impurity; (2) "biblical" (*biblische*) from the Greek word for "books," which reminds us of the imperial and royal books that give us laws and constitutions of various lands—so also our Lord and God has given us his books which we commonly call "Holy Bible." And just as "testament" means not only a will by which heirs are chosen, but also an alliance, pact, treaty, understanding, or covenant, so God's book contains his will to his chosen heirs to come with the death of his Son, and also his covenant with them. And as the "heirs" and "covenanted people" are

"old" and "new," so is the covenant "old" up to the time of Christ and the "new" from then on to the end of the world.

After this amazingly compact introduction of a few sentences, Bullinger names biblical and apocryphal books, strung skillfully on a historical sequence with indications of content and brief evaluations. He has completed this on the fourth small octavo page, to conclude with the same idea with which he started:

These described books of the old and new testaments are the true holy, biblical (also called canonical) testament or covenant books—indeed the Bible is the true authentic infallible "land" or church book of God.

The analogy with secular, national constitutions and the church is then carried on into a second chapter of popular apologia.

"That the holy, biblical writing of the Old and New Testaments shall incontestably be believed" (title of chapter two) is a surprisingly thin essay. Bullinger argues that many lesser books and more recent ones—the law books and constitutions, wills, letters, and seals of many lands and places are highly regarded and thoroughly believed ("indeed to doubt them is unlawful")—although they have a thousand-fold less authority (*Ansehem*) than the Bible. Then how much more shall *God's* word be believed! This Word has been truly, rightly, and genuinely read, preached, heard, held, and defended for so many centuries before and after Christ, in so many kingdoms, lands, tongues, and peoples, throughout the world—orient and occident, midday and midnight, and is recommended by Josephus, Jesus, John and Augustine. Therefore, writes Bullinger, Scriptures shall be believed without any contradiction.

In the entire foregoing chapter ii, Bullinger presents primarily the public reputation of the Bible. It seems to be an argument—or is it merely an appeal?—from *consensus populi*, and *a fortiori*. It is an argument from prestige. We have already seen above in the *Decades* that Bullinger presents an argument from famous men, the patriarchs—but this is supportive in the *Decades*, not foundational. When we contrast the *Summa*, we find that a popular point of contact, a tactic of communication, determines the sequence. The philological and historical point of departure of the *Decades* is more determined by subject matter, and is certainly Bullinger's actual theological point of departure, as can be demonstrated from many of his writings, not least the Second Helvetic Confession, to which we turn next.

More broadly, and not to be demonstrated today, I suggest that it is impossible to reduce in a convincing and coherent manner the structure of the *Decades* to that of its epitome, the *Summa*. The difference, briefly, is not systematic, but schematic and programmatic. He is not solving theological problems but presenting forcefully the simple essentials that need to be known by all and presented without learned philology or refined theology (although both are necessary in the life of the church, as he insists so emphatically in the *Vester Grund*, of 1563, defending Vermigli against the Strassburgers) which may be complicated and confusing to ordinary believers.

It must also be noted that the two publications in which Bullinger most nearly approximated making his covenant teaching the dominant key and organizing principle are works intended for popular use, the *Summa* and three years later, the student catechism, *Catechesis pro Adultioribus*, both of which lack the technical basis for the covenant teaching such as appears in *De Testamento*, and the *Decades*. It is the *Summa* that is Bullinger's intended "lay dogmatic," and through 27 editions in various languages it functioned as such.

Confessio et expositio simplex . . . (1549-1551). This "Simple Confession and Exposition of Orthodox Faith and Catholic Doctrine . . ." written by Bullinger in 1561 and published in 1566 to aid the cause of the Reformed tradition in Germany, is known in English generally as the *Second Helvetic Confession*. Bullinger intended it originally as his legacy to the Zurich Church, attached to his will, but it became the confession most widely adopted internationally, and was the organizing document of the *Harmonia Confessionum* of 1581, which showed the catholicity of the Reformed wing over against the Council of Trent and against the Lutheran Book of Concord. Translated through the years into 15 languages and published in more than 115 editions, it proved to be the most widely disseminated, and to the present time, most influential of Bullinger's writings. Against the reverie of E. F. K. Mueller, supported by Koch and most others, that this was intended first as a private expression of his own personal faith, I have held in a chapter of Staedtke's *Glauben und Bekennen* (with strong support from Leonhard von Muralt's review in *Zwingliana*) that this document, patterned after the *First Helvetic Confession* of 1536, was from the first intention meant for the whole church. This is not an independent constructive effort as an aid to preachers, as the *Decades*, nor primarily a popular lay dogmatic, as the *Summa*, nor an ad hoc polemic, as the *Warhaffte Bekenntnis*. Rather this work is Bullinger's major, formal effort to speak to and for the church catholic, orthodox, and reformed. If so, it is not surprising that in general disposition and format it follows the *First Helvetic*. Surprising is that none of the works prepared by Bullinger in the 25-year span between the confessions follows the same structure and sequence, or anything significantly close to it. Even more surprising is that the covenant doctrine is missing except in connection with the sacrament of baptism.

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 the 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 materials 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. One device for citing large divisions of the document is: Part I: Ancient Catholic/orthodox teachings, creedal documents and chapters I-XI, closing with reaffirmations of the first four ecumenical Councils and the Athanasian Creed. Part II: Soteriological themes recovered in the Reformation, chapters XII-XVII on Law and Gospel, Spirit and Letter, Justification by Faith, and Good Works of the Faithful. Part III: The One Holy Catholic Church, its Ministry, Sacraments, and various institutions. It is interesting to note that by contrast with the *Decades*, the old orthodoxy is dealt with at the beginning of the Bullinger text, rather than afterwards, and by contrast with the *Summa* and *Catechesis* there is no appearance of the covenant as an organizing scheme for the whole.

Since this is the easiest available, still in print, of all Bullinger's writings, and has been elaborately analyzed by many already mentioned, I shall leave the matter here and turn to the question again of Bullinger as theologian.

Preference for the *Decades*

I am coming increasingly to the conclusion that the Bullinger of the *Decades* is Bullinger himself—more truly himself than in any other major writing. Here we find the

preacher/teacher vigorously addressing his colleagues in a source book of doctrine and learning, made up of fifty lecture-sermons designed to help other preachers in the preparation of sermons for the church. Here in one work we find present Bullinger the exegete, the Bullinger of the treatises pursuing major themes in his own idioms, the comprehensive Bullinger covering the whole realm of Christian teaching, and Bullinger the polemicist defending his positions as catholic and orthodox against criticisms and heresies ancient and modern.

We also find ourselves among what I have begun to call his pervasive convictions. Each of these is a cluster of teachings that turn up often throughout his lifework, and altogether create not so much a formal presupposition of his thought, or a body of unquestioned assumptions, or a systematic principle, as the theological atmosphere within which he worked. Chief among his pervasive convictions are (1) the antiquity of the Christian faith, (2) the one eternal covenant, and (3) catholic orthodoxy. To illustrate the first and third, the covenant being rather well known in Bullinger's presentation of it, let us look for a moment at the following, briefly, under five headings.

1. First in the *Decades* Bullinger grounds himself upon and fortifies himself within an array of twelve unquestionably orthodox/catholic documents from the ancient church, such as the Nicene and "Athanasian" creeds. He does not merely reprint the texts, but gives a brief historical setting explaining his choices and sources, allying himself inter alia with Cyril, Augustine, and "that godly prince Theodosius the Great." And these ancient symbols all stand within the most catholic and orthodox doctrine of all: the sole authority of canonical Scripture: "the writings of the prophets and apostles were the source, the guide, the rule and judge in all these (early orthodox) Councils." Among the great doctors of the church and orthodox councils "nothing was changed in the doctrines of the apostles, nor was anything new added." One does not need to know Latin to understand where Bullinger writes "*fidei nostrae Christiana, apostolica, catholica, orthodoxa et vera, antiqua et indubitata fides et doctrina est . . .*" Thus retroactively based, grounded, fortified, and motivated, Bullinger launches his work with three lectures on the Word of God, the only source of the faith of the true church, ancient and contemporary.

2. The Bullinger that emerges at this point in the first sermons of the first *Decade* is very contemporary, i.e., sixteenth-century contemporary. We are at once involved with Bullinger's humanist philology, his innate sense of history and historical apologetics, his Luther-like preference for the viva vox of revelation over words written down. In early pages we encounter all this, some of which is not only fresh and original, but also highly idiosyncratic and questionable. Original revelation, before writing was invented, took place according to Bullinger by God's speaking in a human [*humana*] voice. Then the speech [*eloquium*] of God was passed along from patriarch to patriarch with great care. Although Bullinger the theologian teaches that God's word is always given and protected in a trustworthy manner by the Spirit—given all that—Bullinger the chronologist and apologist reassures us that from the time of Adam to the time of recording by Moses, the overlapping of the long lives of the oldest patriarchs yields a sequence of just *seven* witnesses: Adam, taught by God, lived 243 years into the life of Methuselah. Jacob the patriarch could have learned the true teaching from Shem, even as Shem heard it from Methuselah, and so on. And *further*, these were the most famous and public men of the ancient world: too well known and too well watched for falsification to occur.

3. As to content, this tradition of the Old Testament patriarchs and prophets is both Trinitarian and Christocentric, having derived originally from the "*erst gruendlich evangelium*" (protoevangelion?), recorded in Genesis 3:15. Bullinger, summarily repeating

here from his treatise *The Old Faith*, derives practically the complete Apostles' Creed from that verse, as well as justification by faith, and also the first announcement of the Covenant. This means that the gospel of free forgiveness was known from the beginning of the race, and all variety of the multiple religions of human history are not merely idolatrous but aberrations of a gospel once known: apostate, and inexcusably so. (No theological writer, ancient or modern, to my knowledge, has derived so much from that text, although the Mariological and even Josephological derivations interpret the text fantastically on the single theme of the "seed.") Then Bullinger goes on to speak of the inspiration of writers and hearers of the scriptural word, and to offer both exegetical rules derived from sixteenth-century humanism and the hermeneutical principles of faith and love from Augustine's *On Christian Doctrine*. He insists in Lecture III that Scripture must not only be expounded on the basis of the Hebrew and Greek text, and with the help of translations, but it is to be applied to daily contemporary life as well as to the interpretation of history more broadly.

4. Also in the *Decades* Bullinger is free to indulge in displays of classical learning and philology (often drawn from the treatises) that would be aside from the purposes of either the *Summa*, meant for lay consumption, or the *Confessio Helvetica Posterior*, meant as a standard for the church. He is free to be brief or verbose, technical or popular, to review and summarize and preview and illustrate, to spread out his biblical and historical and humanist learning as the subject suits him.

5. The several introductory/dedicatory letters, written as publication of the *Decades* took place in sections, allow Bullinger to speak directly as in his correspondence generally, and to speak to specific persons and contemporary situations in a way that is his own hallmark, and does not appear comparably in the *Summa*, or *Confessio Helvetica Posterior*.

Concluding Summary and Suggestions

In summary conclusion, the foregoing essay has taken several positions that may ignite discussion. We have taken issue with the view that Bullinger is a rigorously systematic theologian, either with (Koch, Baker) or without (Neuser) the centrality of the covenant as his leading thought. We have stressed that from his earliest writings and throughout his life biblical commentary was basic to all his work, and that at the same time he was thinking in terms of special biblical themes in a way that produced quite a crop of thematic/polemic treatises, and throughout all these years (beginning in 1524) he saw Christian theology as a whole and almost a dozen times prepared *Gesamtdarstellungen* of the entire array of Christian doctrines. These latter, however, show a variety that is not accounted for so well by inner cohesion or development, or the working out of a systematic principle, as by the particular purpose or need he seeks to meet. For want of a better term we have called these Bullinger's "schemes" or programs of theology. And we have maintained that no one of Bullinger's own comprehensive works can serve as an adequate structure on which to arrange a synoptic presentation of his thought. Neither the *Decades*, nor the *Summa*, nor the *Second Helvetic Confession* (to name what in most minds would be the chief contenders for this role), can serve the purpose alone. And no one of the three can be forced into the scheme of another.

This impasse has caused the present writer to invent a sequence and a weighting of various themes of Bullinger's thought that we do not find specifically anywhere among his writings, but which appears a more viable way of presenting a synoptic overview than Bullinger himself supplies in any one instance. This is bound to be arbitrary and lays the

writer open to the charge of methodological inadequacy, if not arrogance. It will certainly be revised by others, if not rejected out of hand. Nonetheless this scheme emerged after some years of reading Bullinger extensively, and may at least provide incentive for some interesting reaction.

The disposition that I am suggesting, for the present, is approximately as follows. It is offered to invite critique, evaluation, and improvement. First would come a detailed descriptive analysis of the chief programmatic and theologically comprehensive writings after the model of my article *Theologische Aufbau der Confessio Helvetica Posterior*, published in Staedtke's *Glauben und Bekennen*. Then this sequence of the chief topics. Each has also been worked out in detail.

I

Pervasive Convictions of Bullinger's Theological Lifework

- A. The Antiquity of the Christian Faith
- B. The One Eternal Covenant
- C. Catholic Orthodoxy

II

Revelation and Faith

- A. The Word of God and Scripture
- B. Christ and the Gospel
- C. The Source, Content, and Effects of Faith
- D. Human Nature and Sin
- E. Predestination or Election

III

Law, Repentance and Good Works

- A. Love and the Forms of Virtue
- B. Repentance and Conversion
- C. The Christian Life

IV

God and the World

- A. The Trinity and Classic Christology
- B. Providence, Creation, and Historical Life
- C. True and False Worship,
with further discussion of the covenant

V

The Church and its Ministry

- A. One, Holy, Catholic
- B. The Ministers
- C. Sacraments
- D. Churchly Responsibilities

The Civil Order

- A. Theological Foundations of Government
- B. The Zurich Structure of Church and State