

## New Studies on Heinrich Bullinger

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**Architect of Reformation: An Introduction to Heinrich Bullinger, 1504–1575**, ed. Bruce *Gordon* and Emidio *Campi*, in: *Texts & Studies in Reformation and Post-Reformation Thought*, gen. ed. Richard A. *Muller*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004.

**Evangelische Theologie. Zum 500. Geburtstag von Heinrich Bullinger**, Vol. 64/2 (2004).

Peter Opitz, **Heinrich Bullinger als Theologe: Eine Studie zu den «Dekaden»**, Zürich: Theologischer Verlag, 2004.

**Heinrich Bullinger und seine Zeit: Eine Vorlesungsreihe**, ed. Emidio *Campi*. *Zwingliana: Beiträge zur Geschichte Zwinglis der Reformation und des Protestantismus in der Schweiz*. Band XXXI, Zürich: Theologischer Verlag, 2004.

The publication of each of these volumes coincides with the 500th anniversary of the birth of Heinrich Bullinger. Though Bullinger's contributions to the Reformation of the sixteenth century, and especially the Reformed churches of Europe, have long been understated, the comprehensiveness of the research represented in these studies will go far in redressing the relative neglect of Bullinger as a figure of first importance during this period. At no time since the sixteenth century itself has Bullinger's life and work been the subject of so much interest. These works, which cover a wide range of subjects directly and indirectly related to Bullinger's life and theology, are themselves but a significant part of a growing body of literature on the role of Bullinger during the period of the Reformation.

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The first of these studies, *Architect of Reformation: An Introduction to Heinrich Bullinger, 1504–1575*, represents one of only a few modern English studies of Bullinger's work as an «architect» of Reformation. It is particularly noteworthy that this volume constitutes the «first fruit of a formal agreement of co-operation signed in 2001, between the St. Andrews Reformation Studies Institute and the Institut für Schweizerische Reformationsgeschichte in Zurich» (p. 11). Unlike previous English studies, which focus specifically

upon one or another feature of Bullinger's thought, this volume provides a wide range of chapters on various aspects of Bullinger's life and theology. The purpose of the collection is to give the reader a kind of survey of recent scholarship on Bullinger and to stimulate further research. Included in the series, *Texts and Studies in Reformation and Post-Reformation Thought* (gen. ed. Richard A. Muller), this collection of essays is divided into two parts, the first dealing with «Theology, Spirituality and Ecclesiology,» the second dealing with «Humanism, Politics and Family.» By treating a broad range of subjects in respect to Bullinger's life and work, the authors hope to encourage students to pursue in greater depth the study of Bullinger and his place in the history of the Reformation and early modern Europe.

The first contribution to this collection of essays on various aspects of Bullinger's reformatory labor is a fine introductory chapter by Bruce Gordon. In this chapter, Gordon introduces the reader to Bullinger by means of a short biography of his life, detailing Bullinger's reforming activity as *Antistes* in Zürich and summarizing the history of research on his life and theology. One of the interesting features of Gordon's introduction is his consideration of the question why Bullinger's influence seemed to wane considerably in the seventeenth century, even though he was a first rank reformer in the sixteenth. Gordon ascribes this to such factors as the increasing provincialism of the Swiss institutions of higher learning and the Remonstrants' appeal to Bullinger's view in the debate about the doctrine of predestination at the Synod of Dortrecht in 1618–1619.

Gordon's introductory chapter is followed by a posthumously published essay by Edward Dowey, «Heinrich Bullinger as Theologian: Thematic, Comprehensive, and Schematic.» Slightly edited by Elsie McKee for publication in this volume, Dowey's essay seeks to characterize the unique structure and characteristics of Bullinger's work as a theologian. After noting several characteristics of Bullinger's theology that are generally acknowledged among scholars, Dowey offers a critique of the proposals of Ernst Koch and J. Wayne Baker, who maintain that Bullinger was a systematic theologian whose theology was organized thematically in terms of the doctrine of the covenant. According to Dowey, Bullinger's theological writings are of three types: biblical commentary; thematic and polemic treatises; and comprehensive presentations of Christian doctrine as a whole. Upon the basis of his survey and reading of these three types of writings, Dowey offers the thesis that Bullinger's theology exhibits several dominant motifs and is most significantly set forth in his *Decades*. Commenting on the *Decades*, Dowey contends that «the Bullinger of the *Decades* is Bullinger himself, more truly than in any other major writing» (p. 6).

The remaining chapters of the first part of this volume address a variety of aspects of Bullinger's theology. Mark Taplin, in a chapter entitled, «Bullinger

on the Trinity: *Religionis Nostrae Caput et Fundamentum*» provides an excellent survey of Bullinger's doctrine of the Trinity. Taplin notes that Bullinger's doctrine of the Trinity has not been the subject of particular study, though some of the characteristics of Bullinger's theology are well illustrated in his defense of the classic Western and Augustinian consensus. This chapter also contains a fascinating account of Bullinger's defense of the orthodox and catholic doctrine of the Trinity in the face of the challenge of the anti-trinitarians who threatened to undermine the cause of the reformation in Poland and elsewhere. The next contribution is an essay by Peter Opitz, «Bullinger's *Decades: Instruction in Faith and Conduct*.» In his essay, Opitz offers a portrait of Bullinger's distinctive theology through the lens of what is arguably his most important theological work. The remaining chapters in the first part of the volume address dimensions of Bullinger's work that have not received much attention in the literature. Bruce Gordon («Bullinger's Vernacular Writings: Spirituality and the Christian Life») treats the subject of «the spiritual grammar and vocabulary» developed by Bullinger to describe the Christian life. A chapter by Roland Diethelm («Bullinger and Worship: «Thereby Does One Plant and Sow the True Faith»») considers an aspect of Bullinger's work that has usually been ignored, namely, his contribution to the development of the liturgy or pattern of worship of the Swiss Reformed churches.<sup>1</sup> The final chapter in the first part of the volume, «Bullinger on Church Authority: The Transformation of the Prophetic Role in Christian Ministry,» by Daniel Bolliger, evaluates Bullinger's doctrine of the preaching ministry and his acceptance of his role as *Antistes* of the Zürich church.

In the second part of this volume, various non-theological and non-ecclesiastical dimensions of Bullinger's work are investigated. Emidio Campi («Bullinger's Early Political and Theological Thought: *Brutus Tigurinus*») presents a study of a drama that Bullinger wrote early in his life when he was teacher at the monastery school in Kappel am Albis. Campi shows how Bullinger's drama illustrated his interest in the civic community and the need for public justice in a political order that reflects the requirements of divine justice. The next chapter, «Heinrich Bullinger's Efforts to Document the Zurich Reformation: History as Legacy,» by Christian Moser, offers an account of Bullinger's life-long interest in history, and his efforts to chronicle the emergence of the Swiss Confederation and the Reformation in Zürich. The remainder of the chapters in this part of the volume describe Bullinger's involvement with the schools in Zürich («Bullinger and the Schools,» by Kurt Jakob Rüetschi), his extraordinary correspondence with contemporaries in the sixteenth century («Bullinger's Correspondence: An International News Network,» by Rainer Henrich), his involvements as a church politician

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<sup>1</sup> This chapter is a revised version of Diethelm's contribution to *Evangelische Theologie*.

(«Heinrich Bullinger as Church Politician,» by Andreas Mühling),<sup>2</sup> and his work on the subject of Christian marriage («Bullinger's *Der Christlich Eestand*: Marriage and the Covenant,» by Carrie E. Euler).

Even this brief sketch of the contents of this volume should be enough to confirm that it admirably achieves the objective of the editor, namely, to provide the English-speaking reader with a broad introduction to Bullinger as an architect of the Reformation and to stimulate further research into his contributions to the sixteenth-century European and Reformation history. The inclusion of a selected bibliography of secondary sources also enhances the value of this collection of essays.

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The second of these studies, *Zum 500. Geburtstag von Heinrich Bullinger*, is a special, commemorative issue of *Evangelische Theologie*. In his introductory essay, Christoph Strohm notes that Bullinger has always stood in the shadow of his predecessor, Zwingli, even though he served for more than forty years as the *Antistes* or chief pastor of the Zürich church, authored a great number of writings, and corresponded with leading ecclesiastical and political figures throughout Europe. The contributors to this volume aim to enhance our understanding of Bullinger's life and influence, and contribute as well to a deeper understanding of his distinctive theological position among the Reformers of the sixteenth century. The broader purpose of these essays is to enrich our understanding of the cultural as well as theological influence of Bullinger's work with a view to the contemporary challenges facing the evangelical church. Rather than narrowly focusing upon Bullinger as a theologian and Reformer of the sixteenth century, the authors seek to place Bullinger in the broader setting of European history and to consider his role in the social and political history of the Swiss Republic.

The titles of the contributions to this volume reflect this broad interest and focus. The first essay by Andreas Mühling, «Bullingers Bedeutung für die europäische Reformationsgeschichte,» challenges the older assumptions regarding the pre-eminence of Geneva and Calvin to the history of the Reformation of the sixteenth century. Mühling details the myriad facets of Bullinger's labor as *Antistes* in Zürich and argues that Zürich under his leadership rivaled Geneva in importance as a theological and church-political center. A second article by Peter Opitz, «Heinrich Bullinger und Martin Luther. Gemeinsamkeiten und Differenzen,» describes Bullinger's indebtedness to Luther's insights regarding the Christological focus of Scripture.

<sup>2</sup> Mühling's chapter is a translation of his lecture that is published in *Heinrich Bullinger und seine Zeit*, ed. Emidio Campi.

Emidio Campi, in his essay, «Bullingers Rechts- und Staatsdenken,» offers a compelling account of Bullinger's conception of the relation between the church and state, between the ecclesiastical and political dimensions of life. Campi argues that, by comparison to Zwingli, Bullinger developed a more satisfactory view of the inter-relation and distinction between the respective callings of pastor and civil magistrate than was the case with Zwingli. The essay by Roland Diethelm, «... da uebt, pflanzt und nerd man den waren glauben,» addresses the subject of Bullinger's contributions to the liturgy of the Reformed churches. Isolde Karle, in his essay, «Praedicatio verbi dei est verbum dei: Bullingers Formel neu gelesen,» offers a careful assessment of Bullinger's doctrine of preaching, which is expressed in this well-known formula. Karle warns against a superficial reading of this formula, which would separate the event of preaching from its context in the church and the hearing of the congregation, or which would diminish the preacher's responsibility to speak for God in conformity to the Scriptures. Heinrich Assel («Bund – souveränes Leben mit Gott im Gebot und Gesetz») treats a subject that is often discussed in Bullinger studies. Assel's essay attempts to illustrate how Bullinger's covenant view encourages a view of Christian freedom in life-communion with God and obedience to the divine command. In his concluding essay, «Der Epigone – das Bild Bullingers in den letzten Jahrhunderten,» Christoph Strohm presents a fascinating account of the history of the interpretation of Bullinger's life and thought. Strohm details the manner in which Bullinger was often placed in the background in comparison to Zwingli. Strohm argues a plausible thesis that, because Zwingli's theology was more amenable to the Enlightenment assumptions of historians of doctrine in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, he tended to overshadow Bullinger in traditional historical studies.

The diverse contributions to this volume provide a rich mosaic of Bullinger's life and theology, not only in terms of Bullinger's contributions to the reformation of the church in Switzerland and elsewhere, but also in terms of his broader political and cultural influence.

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Previous research on Bullinger has tended to focus upon particular aspects of his theology. Special attention has been given to Bullinger's doctrine of predestination, particularly in comparison to the view of Calvin. J. Wayne Baker has proposed the thesis that Bullinger, unlike the Genevan Reformer, was the author of the «other Reformed tradition,» which emphasized a bilateral covenant doctrine rather than Calvin's testamentary view of sovereign election. Some interpretations of Bullinger's theology, for example, that of Ernst Koch, have treated the Second Helvetic Confession as Bullinger's principal

theological writing. The limited range and scope of studies of Bullinger's theology have contributed to the prejudice that Bullinger, when compared to other leading theologians of the sixteenth century, was not a significant or creative theologian in his own right.

In view of the relative neglect of the study of Bullinger as a theologian, the publication of Peter Opitz' work on Bullinger's *Decades* is a most welcome development for modern Bullinger studies. Though Walter Hollweg wrote an earlier study of Bullinger's *Decades*,<sup>3</sup> Opitz' study is, as its title indicates, a major new consideration of Bullinger's work as a theologian. While Opitz recognizes that Bullinger was not a systematic thinker in the way in which Calvin was, for example, he seeks to offer a thorough study of Bullinger's most substantial theological writing that illustrates the distinctive characteristics of Bullinger's thought.<sup>4</sup>

In the introduction to his study, Opitz provides a helpful analysis of the state of previous research upon Bullinger's *Decades*. In the course of this introduction, Opitz presents a thorough exposition of the context, intention and composition of the *Decades*. By means of this introduction, he persuasively argues the need for a new consideration of the *Decades* as the most important of Bullinger's theological writings. According to Opitz, Bullinger's reputation as a theologian requires a careful and thorough treatment of this work, which, as we noted earlier, has also been designated by Dowey as the most significant source for any evaluation of Bullinger's theological system.

Since the *Decades* are a collection of Bullinger's sermons, which were presented to the pastors of Zürich in their *prophezei*, previous studies have tended to treat them in an unsystematic manner. Bullinger's presentation of his theology in the form of sermons, which are often pastoral in character, has often led interpreters to treat Bullinger as an unsophisticated thinker. One of the great strengths of Opitz' study is his argument that the form of Bullinger's theology does not compromise its theological integrity or complexity. Though Bullinger presents his theology in a homiletical form, this is in keeping with his convictions about the nature of the pastoral office as a ministry of the Word of God in the church of Jesus Christ. Theology must serve the pastoral and preaching ministry. And so Bullinger casts his theology in a form that serves this purpose. However, as Opitz properly argues, the *Decades* are not simply sermons to be preached, but rather extended exegetical and theological expositions of the principal points of traditional, catholic Christian theology.

<sup>3</sup> *Heinrich Bullingers Hausbuch. Eine Untersuchung über die Anfänge der reformierten Predigtliteratur* (Neukirchen: Verlag der Buchhandlung des Erziehungsvereins, 1956).

<sup>4</sup> An additional fruit of Opitz' study that will be of lasting significance to Bullinger studies is his preparation of the first critical edition of Bullinger's *Sermonum decades quinque*.

Opitz divides his extensive commentary on the theology of Bullinger's *Decades* into six major sections. Each of these sections emphasizes, as a leading motif of Bullinger's theology, the «communion» (Gemeinschaft) between the Triune God and his people that is effected through the preaching and hearing of the Word of God. By his identification of this leading motif of Bullinger's theology, Opitz is able to illustrate the correspondence between Bullinger's typical reformational emphasis upon the Word of God on the one hand, and the covenant that God grants to his people through Christ on the other. Without insisting that Bullinger was a «covenant theologian» in the sense that the doctrine of covenant is a kind of organizing principle for his theology, Opitz nonetheless shows how central a theme the idea of communion with God is in Bullinger's theology.

The six sections of Opitz' study follow the sequence of topics in Bullinger's *Decades*, and provide a clear picture of the structure of Bullinger's theological thought. The first section deals with Bullinger's theology of the Word of God («Gemeinschaft mit Gott im Hören auf Gottes Wort»). The second section addresses Bullinger's exposition of the doctrine of the Trinity, which confirms the traditional and catholic nature of Bullinger's theology («Gemeinschaft mit dem dreieinigen Gott»). The third section summarizes Bullinger's understanding of the mediatorial work of Christ, which is communicated to believers by the Spirit of Christ («Gemeinschaft mit Gott als pneumatische Christusgemeinschaft»). The fourth section outlines Bullinger's conception of the Christian life as life in covenant with God («Gemeinschaft mit Gott als Leben im Bund»). The fifth section describes Bullinger's understanding of the law of God and its role in creation and redemption («Gemeinschaft mit Gott als Leben mit dem Gesetz»). And in the sixth and final section of his study, Opitz presents a sketch of Bullinger's doctrine of the church as the communion of the saints («Gemeinschaft mit Gott als Gemeinschaft der Heiligen»).

By presenting Bullinger's theology in this form, Opitz is able to demonstrate that Bullinger's theological interests were as wide as any other theologian of the sixteenth century. A comparison, for example, of Opitz' outline of Bullinger's *Decades* will show many similarities in the structure of his thought with that of his contemporary, Calvin. But this outline will also show those respects in which Bullinger distinguished himself among his contemporaries. Opitz' thorough and compelling statement of Bullinger's theology also serves to illustrate Bullinger's historical and catholic emphasis, as well as the irenic and pastoral nature of his theology. In this way, Opitz is able to demonstrate Bullinger's theological sophistication and his interest in remaining true to the catholic consensus of the Reformed tradition.

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The last of these volumes, *Heinrich Bullinger und seine Zeit: Eine Vorlesungsreihe*, ed. Emidio Campi, offers a number of substantial chapters on various features of Bullinger's life and theology. The various chapters were originally written as lectures for a summer semester course on «Heinrich Bullinger und seine Zeit,» which was held in 2003 under the sponsorship of the Theological Faculty of the University of Zürich. The diverse contributions of this volume, which range from an introductory chapter on Bullinger in his historical context to a closing chapter on Bullinger's writings regarding marriage, testify to the breadth of contemporary Bullinger research. The contributions to this volume also illustrate how the study of Bullinger's life and thought is now being enriched by research that goes beyond the limited range of topics in the older literature on Bullinger.

Emidio Campi's lecture, «Heinrich Bullinger und seine Zeit,» introduces this volume of lectures by providing a broad sketch of the historical context of Bullinger's life and work. Campi details various facets of Bullinger's work as a pastor, reformer, historian, and theologian, and argues that Bullinger was a more significant contributor to and theologian of the Reformation than has traditionally been admitted. The second lecture by Peter Stotz, «Bullingers Bild des Mittelalters,» examines Bullinger's attitude toward the church and theological tradition of the Middle Ages. According to Stotz, there is evidence of a more significant dependence and appreciation for this tradition by Bullinger than is often acknowledged, even by Bullinger himself. The third lecture in this collection, «Die Zürcher Buch- und Lesekultur 1520–1575,» by Urs B. Leu, offers a fascinating account of the book publishing houses of Zürich, especially the Froschauer, during the period of Bullinger's work. Leu's lecture includes an examination of Bullinger's own library and the influence of the distribution of his and other works in sixteenth-century Europe. The next two lectures included in this volume examine Bullinger's exegetical work («Heinrich Bullinger als Ausleger des Alten Testaments am Beispiel seiner Predigten Daniel 1 und 2,» by Thomas Krüger; «Bullinger als Neutestamentler: Sein Kommentar zu den Paulusbriefen und den Evangelien,» by Irena Backus) and treat Bullinger's work as an exegetical theologian. One of the acknowledged features of Bullinger's thought is his emphasis upon the catholicity of the church and his keen interest in history. Several chapters in this volume of lectures address these aspects of Bullinger's theology. Silke-Petra Bergjan («Bullinger und die griechischen Kirchenväter in der konfessionellen Auseinandersetzung») and Alfred Schindler («Bullinger und die lateinischen Kirchenväter») consider, respectively, Bullinger's appreciation of the Greek and Latin church fathers. The remaining lectures in this collection treat Bullinger's influence upon the Reformation in Hungary and Poland («Die Ausstrahlungen Bullingers auf die Reformation in Ungarn und Polen,» by Erich Bryner), his articulation of a theology of «commu-



nion» in a time of conflict of faith («Eine Theologie der Gemeinschaft im Zeitalter der Glaubensspaltung,» by Peter Opitz), his systematic theological interest in the *Confessio Helvetica Posterior* («Heinrich Bullinger als Systematiker – am Beispiel der *Confessio Helvetica Posterior*, by Pierre Bühler), his work as a church politician («Heinrich Bullinger als Kirchenpolitiker,» by Andreas Mühling), his work as a historian of Swiss history («Heinrich Bullinger als Historiker der Schweizer Geschichte,» by Hans Ulrich Bächtold), and his writings on the subject of marriage and family («Heinrich Bullingers Eheschriften,» by Detlef Roth).

The contributions to this volume range widely in subject matter, but they all contribute to a rich and more complete picture of Bullinger in his time. Though Bullinger's work has often been slighted by historians, these essays present a striking portrait of Bullinger's eminence during his own day.

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We have not been able to give a full representation of the rich and diverse contributions of these four volumes to the study of Bullinger's life and thought. However, the publication of these volumes on the occasion of the 500th anniversary of Bullinger's birth does prompt several observations about the state of Bullinger research.

First, the high quality and comprehensiveness of these volumes indicate that the study of Bullinger's life and thought has finally achieved a kind of maturity that was not present in the older literature. Bullinger, who has often been known simply as Zwingli's «successor» or a «Reformer in the wings» (Steinmetz), is now recognized to be a figure of first importance to the history of the sixteenth-century Reformation. Perhaps it goes too far to say that future studies will begin to speak of Zwingli as Bullinger's «predecessor» or of Calvin as Bullinger's «colleague.» However, the publication of these volumes, and the recent publication or anticipated publication of a number of critical editions of Bullinger's works, confirm that we are entering a new period of Bullinger studies. No longer will it be possible to view Bullinger as anything other than a principal figure of the Protestant Reformation and the development of the Reformed churches of Europe.

Second, unlike the older studies of Bullinger's life and thought, which often focused in a limited way upon particular features of his theology or relations with fellow Reformers, these studies exhibit a far richer appreciation for the complexity and breadth of Bullinger's reformatory labors and theological writings. Features of Bullinger's thought that were largely neglected in older studies are now becoming the focus of particular attention. As Bullinger emerges from the shadow of Zwingli and relative obscurity in comparison to the magisterial Reformers, scholars are discovering the remarkable

range of his reformatory labors. Bullinger was a theologian and churchman. But he was also a remarkable correspondent with leading church and civic figures of the sixteenth century. He was also a substantial historian of the Swiss church and Confederation, whose influence was formative in many ways for the social, cultural and political, as well as churchly, settings in which he worked. The Bullinger who emerges in these volumes is a much more complicated and contextualized figure than the Bullinger of an earlier stage of research.

And third, with the publication of Peter Opitz' substantial volume on Bullinger's *Decades*, we may be entering a period in which Bullinger will be viewed as a theologian in his own right. It has long been acknowledged that Bullinger was an influential figure of the sixteenth century. His correspondence with church and state officials during the forty years of his service as *Antistes* in Zürich exceeds by far that of any contemporary. His contributions to the development of the churches through his pastoral labors and authorship of the *Second Helvetic Confession* was also generally acknowledged. Furthermore, Bullinger's role as a preacher was recognized through the influence of his *Decades*, which served during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries as a popular and widely-distributed kind of dogmatics of the Reformed faith for lay members of the church. Despite the general awareness of Bullinger's contributions to the Reformation, however, few past interpreters would have argued that Bullinger deserves respect as a significant theologian of the Reformation. Bullinger's theological writings were frequently compared unfavorably with Calvin's, particularly his *Institutes*. Opitz' study of Bullinger's theology makes a very important contribution in this respect. Rather than concede the claim that Bullinger's legacy lies in areas other than in theology, Opitz successfully presents a sophisticated account of Bullinger as a major systematic thinker and theologian. In Opitz' volume, the reader is introduced to a theologian who offers a comprehensive statement of the «catholic» faith of the Reformed churches, and who does so in an irenic or moderate spirit. The case could well be argued that Bullinger's *Decades* and *Second Helvetic Confession* represent the two most influential and comprehensive statements of the theology of the Reformed churches in the sixteenth century. Opitz' contribution to the study of Bullinger as a theologian will undoubtedly become a standard point of reference for many years to come.

It is my hope that these fine studies will stimulate a great deal of new and careful study of Bullinger's role in the Reformation of the sixteenth century. If the quality of these volumes is any indicator, students of Bullinger are entering an exciting period in the history of Bullinger studies.

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