

The Understanding of the Church in Heinrich Bullinger's Theology

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The church is central to Bullinger's theology,¹ although not the centre of it.² Salvation itself is inseparable from the church, so that he frequently quotes Cyprian's statement that there is no salvation

¹ The main studies of the church in Bullinger's theology, besides those on church discipline and the relation of church and state which are not considered here, are the following: Peter *Walser*, *Die Prädestination bei Heinrich Bullinger*, Zurich 1957, 27–31; Heinold *Fast*, *Heinrich Bullinger und die Täufer, Weierhof, Pfalz 1959*; Joachim *Staedtke*, *Die Theologie des jungen Bullinger*, Zurich 1962, 216–226; Simon van der *Linde*, *Die Lehre von der Kirche in der Confessio Helvetica Posterior*, in: Joachim Staedtke (ed.), *Glauben und Bekennen: 400 Jahre Confessio Helvetica Posterior. Beiträge zu ihrer Geschichte und Theologie*, Zurich 1966, 337–367; Ernst *Koch*, *Kirche und Konfession im Zweiten Helvetischen Bekenntnis*, in: *Zwingliana* 12 (1967), 522–532; Ernst *Koch*, *Die Theologie der Confessio Helvetica Posterior*, Neukirchen 1968, 216–246; J. Wayne *Baker*, *Heinrich Bullinger and the Covenant*, Athens, OH 1980; Fritz *Büsser*, »Die Stadt auf dem Berg«: Bullingers reformatorisches Vermächtnis an der Wende zum 21. Jahrhundert, in: *Zwingliana* 25 (1998), 21–42; Peter *Opitz*, *Heinrich Bullinger als Theologe: Eine Studie zu den »Dekaden«*, Zurich 2004, 417–461; Herman J. *Selderhuis*, *Kirche am Kreuz: Die Ekklesiologie Heinrich Bullingers*, in: Emidio Campi, Peter Opitz (eds), *Heinrich Bullinger: Life – Thought – Influence*, vol. 2, Zurich 2007 (*Zürcher Beiträge zur Reformationsgeschichte* 24), 515–536. – Abbreviations used in this article: *Harding*: *The Decades*, ed. Thomas Harding, 4 vols., Cambridge 1849–1852; *HBBibl*: *Beschreibendes Verzeichnis der gedruckten Werke von Heinrich Bullinger*, ed. Joachim Staedtke, Zurich 1972 (*Heinrich Bullinger Werke I/1*); *HBBW*: *Heinrich Bullinger Werke. Zweite Abteilung: Briefwechsel*, Zurich 1973–; *HBTS*: *Heinrich Bullinger Werke. Dritte Abteilung: Theologische Schriften*, Zurich 1983–; *RB*: *Reformierte Bekenntnisschriften*, ed. Heiner Faulenbach, Neukirchen-Vluyn 2002–; *RC*: *Reformed Confessions of the 16th Century*, ed. A.S. Cochrane, London 1966.

² See, for example, *Linde*, *Die Lehre*, 337 who asks whether the church could not be seen as the centre of his thought rather than the covenant. It is notable that it is one

outside the church. It is not just that it is the church which has the message of salvation, but rather that salvation is understood in terms of a community and not simply in terms of individuals.³ This is expressed in images of the church, such as God's house, the body of Christ, and the vine. After the description of the church in *The Decades* as God's »most excellent work«, Bullinger states that in his goodness God has chosen men and women »in whom he may dwell«, and who will be »called by his name a people, a house [...] or church of the living God«.⁴

The Context for Understanding Bullinger's Teaching on the Church

The emphases in Bullinger's discussion of the church reflect in part his controversy with conservative and radical opponents. Debate with his papal opponents, focuses on the understanding of salvation and scripture in relation to the church, as well as the issue of unity. With the Anabaptists, beside the unity of the church, there is

of his sermons on the church which is published to represent Bullinger in The Library of Christian Classics volume on Zwingli and Bullinger: G.W. Bromiley (ed.), Zwingli and Bullinger, London 1953 (The Library of Christian Classics 24). *Selderhuis*, Kirche, 516 refers to the church as »the centre of Bullinger's thought and work«. In his reference to it as the centre of Bullinger's thought, he goes beyond his quotation from Bruce Gordon, Clerical Discipline and the Rural Reformation: The Synod in Zürich, 1532–1580, Bern 1992 (Zürcher Beiträge zur Reformationsgeschichte 16), 61: »[...] and the emphasis of his work was therefore upon ecclesiology and Church reform«.

³ The Christian's relation to Christ is not apart from the church, but set in the church. In commenting on the vine and the branches, Bullinger states that the union of Christ and the saints is »in the church« (*Commentary on John* [HBBib], no. 153], 167r, l. 35–36). To be orthodox and catholic is also not simply a matter of personal faith, but is set »in the one and holy church of Christ founded on Christ« (*Commentary on Matthew* [HBBib], no. 144], 32r, l. 35–37). The chapter on the church in the *Second Helvetic Confession* begins: »But because God from the beginning has wished people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth, it is absolutely necessary for there always to have been a church and for there to be now, and to the end of the world.« (RB 2/2, 310.12–14; RC, 261). In *Sermons on the Apocalypse* (HBBib], nos. 327 and 355) the church is related to the preaching of the word rather than to salvation, where Bullinger maintains that the church will never cease to be, as the word of God will exist for ever (82.21–22; English translation 183). *Linde*, Die Lehre, 352 regards the article on the church as linked to that on justification, which immediately precedes it.

⁴ HBTS 3, 740.7–15; Harding, vol. 4, 3.

the issue of its membership and therefore of the holiness and catholicity of the church. These also relate, though in different ways, to salvation.

From the beginning Bullinger rejects the papal view of the church, in particular in his maintaining the authority of the word of God over and against the authority of the church.⁵ This is developed at length in 1538 in *The Authority of Scripture* and in 1571 in *A Discourse on Scripture*. Bullinger rejects the papal view that the church is prior to and greater than scripture and that scripture needs the confirmation or approval of the church. He argues, initially from the Old Testament, that the word of God, spoken and written, is prior to the church, indeed that the church is itself born of the word of God. In this context he deals with the quotation from Augustine that he would not have believed the gospel unless the authority of the church had compelled him.⁶ Generally, Bullinger discusses the relation of the church and scripture in the context of scripture – both before the issue came to a head in the Council of Trent, as in *The Authority of Scripture*, and after. Thus, later, in *Evangelical and Papal Teaching* (1551),⁷ it is placed

⁵ In his *Letter to the Margrave of Brandenburg* (HBBibl, no. 34), 3v, l. 15–25, Bullinger defends his teaching against Luther's assertion that his teaching has been held for a long time, maintaining that the church is based on God's word and not length of time.

⁶ See the discussion in W. Peter Stephens, *The Authority of the Bible in Heinrich Bullinger's Early Works*, in: *Reformation and Renaissance Review* 10 (2008), 37–58. For various discussions of the saying of Augustine, see *Commentary on 2 Corinthians* (HBTS 6, 477.19–30); *Commentary on Galatians* (HBTS 7, 28.32–29.11); *The Authority of Scripture* (HBTS 4, 37–40) and *A Discourse on Scripture* (HBBibl, no. 565), 48r–49v. In *The Authority of Scripture*, Bullinger draws on Gerson's interpretation of the church's role in terms of the primitive church's witness to Christ, as those who saw and heard him, and on his inverting the saying into not believing the church unless the authority of scripture had impelled him. He also cites Marsiglio of Padua's idea of the church's discerning between the voice of the good shepherd and the voice of a stranger, expressed in recognizing the canonical, but not the apocryphal gospels. The church does not authenticate the word any more than the sheep authenticate the shepherd's voice (HBTS 4, 38.26–39.20). Bullinger adds that the church is the congregation of the faithful. However, as faith comes from the word, the church is dependent on the word. »For if faith comes through the Holy Spirit from hearing the word of the Lord and faith makes one a believer, and the church is the assembly of believers, it follows that the gospel or the word of the Lord is before the church and that the church is born from the word of God and so it (the word) is prior and greater.« (HBTS 4, 39.29–40.3).

⁷ For *Evangelical and Papal Teaching*, see HBBibl, no. 231. A detailed contrast

in the opening articles on the authority of scripture, just as it is in the opening sermons of *The Decades* on The Word of God.

The other key areas in which Bullinger attacks the papal view of the church concern Christ and salvation.⁸ This is evident in his responses to the Council of Trent in 1551, but it is, of course, also present in his early works.⁹ In the articles on the church in *Evangelical and Papal Teaching*, the evangelical view describes the church as »built on Christ the rock«. It »hangs on the universal shepherd, and as it accepts no other name than Christ's, so it orders itself in accordance with Christ alone«. By contrast Bullinger describes the papal view as »built on Christ and Peter and his successors«. It »hangs on Christ [...] but also on the pope as the universal shepherd [...] and believes that all churches should order themselves in accordance with the Roman church.« The previous articles on Christ make a similar contrast. The evangelical view maintains that »Christ is the only head of his church and never

between evangelical and papal teaching is present in his *Reply to Faber* (HBBibl, no. 35), D2r, l. 14 – D2v, l. 30, in 1532. See also, for example, a passing reference in *Commentary on 1 Corinthians* in 1534: »Ecclesia enim non est domina scripturae, sed scripturae se subijcit, et omnia sua ad istarum praescriptum agit« (HBTS 6, 271.20–22), and the more extended discussion in *A Discourse on Scripture*: »For the authority of canonical scripture is greater than that of any person, or any bishops, or any synods, or even the whole church.« Bullinger adds that even if the whole church, past, present, and future, were gathered in one place, we could not put our faith in anything without the testimony of scripture. He cites Gerson's stating that the judgement of one man advancing the scripture is to be preferred to a universal council as well as Augustine's observation that it is right even for plenary councils to be corrected by later councils (33r, l. 16 – 33v, l. 1, 23–25). »For the authority of the gospel does not depend on the church, but whatever the church has depends on the word of God.« (39r, l. 3–6).

⁸ *Opitz*, Heinrich Bullinger als Theologe, 419 rightly stresses the strongly christological character of Bullinger's doctrine of the church as well as the centrality of Christ for Bullinger's theology: »Theologie ist Christologie, und Ekklesiologie ist nichts anderes als erweiterte Christologie.«

⁹ In 1525 and 1526 Bullinger refers to the church as hanging on Christ, built on the rock, firmly trusting in Christ, hearing his voice, standing fast with him to the end, and cleaving to Christ as head (HBTS 1, 162.3, 18, 158.15–22; HBTS 2, 111.10–12). Christ is said to rule in the church (HBTS 2, 112.23). Bullinger later makes as well the medieval moral contrast between Christ and the pope, observing in 1549 that Christ did not offer his feet to be kissed (*Perfection* [HBBibl, no. 249], 70.22–71.1). In *Commentary on Ephesians*, in keeping with one of his principles of interpretation, he interprets the reference to the prophets and apostles as the foundation of the church in the light of the other texts, such as 1 Corinthians 3:11, which states that there is no other foundation than Christ (HBTS 7, 158.10–27).

leaves it«. He is »the righteousness [...] of all believers«, so that through his death, when believers die, they at once attain eternal life. The papal view regards Christ as »the head of the church«, but also the pope at Rome, who is »Christ's vicar on earth«. Again, Christ is »the righteousness [...] of all believers«, but in the papal view most believers do not go straight to heaven, but must be purged in purgatory.¹⁰

Bullinger interprets the rock in Matthew 16:18 of Christ and not of Peter or the pope, claiming that this is the catholic and orthodox position. He accepts that many in the early church held that Peter was first or chief in the apostolic college; but that was for Bullinger a matter of order and administration. He rejects that view that Peter was the head or foundation of the church. The authority of prophets and apostles counts for more than the authority of any human writers – and they refer this to Christ, not Peter. Being present in his church, Christ has no need of a vicar.¹¹ In *The Second Helvetic Confession*, after rejecting the pope as head of the church, Bullinger attacks the primacy of Rome, as Christ forbade primacy and dominion among the apostles and their successors.¹²

In the *Council of Trent*, Bullinger maintains that God has given us everything that belongs to salvation in Christ, so that those who »possess him in true faith« have life in its fullness. As he lives in the church by his Spirit, he does not need a vicar.¹³ In *Commentary on Ephesians* after referring to Christ as the head of the church, Bullinger states: »The church lives by the Spirit of Christ«. ¹⁴ He has instituted ministers, who preach the gospel and administer the sacraments, and effects the salvation of believers in the ministry of the word and sacraments. For Bullinger, whoever claims what belongs to Christ alone or changes what he instituted is anti-Christ. In contrast to what the pope claims for himself in relation to coun-

¹⁰ *Evangelical and Papal Teaching*, aa4v–aa6r.

¹¹ *Commentary on Matthew*, 157r, l. 31–39.

¹² RB 2/2, 312.3–30; RC, 263–264. – Bullinger uses the images of the bridegroom and the shepherd as well as that of the head in arguing against having any other head for the church than Christ (*The Christian Religion* [HBBib], no. 283], 98v, l. 21–29).

¹³ The church is related to the Spirit, but not as pervasively as the church is related to Christ, although there are many references, such as that Christ rules in the church in the Spirit (HBTS 2, 112.23, 29–30).

¹⁴ HBTS 7, 177.12.

cils, he is seen by those who preach the gospel as the »author of all the errors and corruptions in the church of God«. ¹⁵ The reformation of the church is fundamentally not the work of the reformers, but the work of Christ. Thus in *Perfection* Christ is described as »the most perfect reformer of the church«. ¹⁶ The reformation of the church means restoring it to the original form given to it by God, removing from it abuses and human inventions.

A difference in the understanding of scripture also underlies Bullinger's different understanding of the church from that of the Anabaptists. In debate with them, Bullinger insists on the determinative role of the whole bible, including the Old Testament. ¹⁷ This supports his stress on the unity of the Old and New Testaments, with one covenant and one people. In keeping with this he argues against Anabaptists that the church includes children as well as adults, and also that the government has a role in the life of the church. Indeed he refers to magistrates in addition to ministers as being necessary to the church. ¹⁸

The different understanding between Bullinger and the Anabaptists of membership of the church is related to their different interpretation of scripture as well as to the authority of both the Old Testament and the New. For Anabaptists the true church consists of believers living holy lives. For Bullinger, by contrast, the church in the New Testament, as in the Old, is a mixed church, in which the godly and ungodly live together until judgement day. In *Anabaptists* (1560), in which he describes their origin and gives his fullest account of them, Bullinger sees having a separate church as the fundamental issue with Anabaptists. ¹⁹

¹⁵ *Council of Trent* (HBBibl, no. 230), 392.9–30, 396.1–8.

¹⁶ *Perfection*, 41.16–42.1.

¹⁷ In a letter to Berchtold Haller on 4 June 1532, Bullinger maintains that the Old Testament must be used with Anabaptists as well as the New Testament and supports this with examples from the New Testament (HBBW 2, 130.9–11, 131.62–132.85). The role of the Old Testament is evident in his early work on baptism (HBTS 2, 72.3–8).

¹⁸ In *The Testament* (1534), Bullinger refers to the need for the magistrate to deal with evil people who subvert the church and attacks those who exclude them from the church (*The Testament* [HBBibl, no. 54], 19r, l. 18 – 19v, l. 4, 19v, l. 12 – 20r, l. 1). Compare the preface (aaa6r, l.3–6) in *Commentary on Matthew*. In *The Decades*, Bullinger can say: »No one denies that God often uses the work of soldiers and magistrates in defending the church against the ungodly and tyrants« (HBTS 3, 758.27–29; Harding, vol. 4, 34).

This issue features largely in *Anabaptist Teaching* (1531). In the opening epistle he refers to a key text, »God is not a God of discord, but of peace«. ²⁰ For Bullinger, Anabaptists have no ground for separation. If they preach scripturally, as Bullinger does, why do they separate? ²¹ Separation is not something they have learnt in Christ. ²² The sixth article rejecting Anabaptist teaching states that re-baptism is rebellion against Christian unity. ²³ Moreover, he rejects their claim to be sent by God, as God is not a God of discord, but of peace and unity. ²⁴ In the third of his twenty five articles Bullinger maintains that Christ and the apostles did not rebel about outward, temporal things, but acted for the peace of the church. ²⁵ By outward things Bullinger means things which do not concern salvation. He charges Anabaptists with separating for outward things, such as interest, tithes, water, riches, and government, contrary to Christ's example. ²⁶ Bullinger defends himself against the charge of separation, although he implies that separation is right when the truth of the gospel is at stake. He maintains that Anabaptist preaching deals with outward things, whereas he, by contrast, deals with faith, innocence, and love. ²⁷ The following year, in *The Prophet*, Bullinger condemns those who desert the church for a trivial reason and whose view and practice of baptism divide the church. ²⁸

¹⁹ Anabaptists deserted other churches. They maintained that in their churches there was manifest amendment of life. By contrast, in evangelical churches, although they preached some things from the gospel, there was no amendment or repentance. There can be no fellowship with those who are impure. (*Anabaptists* [HBBibl], no. 396], 17v, l. 15–26, 18r, l. 17–28).

²⁰ *Anabaptist Teaching* (HBBibl, no. 28), 33r, l. 9–12.

²¹ *Anabaptist Teaching*, 3v, l. 17–24.

²² *Anabaptist Teaching*, 4r, l. 9–10.

²³ *Anabaptist Teaching*, 7r, l. 11–14.

²⁴ *Anabaptist Teaching*, 16v, l. 26–17r, l. 2. – In his exposition of Ephesians 4:4–6, after referring to the Anabaptists who destroy the unity of the church, Bullinger states that »they sin most gravely against God himself and all things sacred who disturb the peace of the church« (HBTS 7, 168.14f., 26f.).

²⁵ *Anabaptist Teaching*, 6v, l. 23–28.

²⁶ *Anabaptist Teaching*, 21r, l. 14–15, 23r, l. 19–23v, l. 3.

²⁷ *Anabaptist Teaching*, 24v, l. 20–27, 25r, l. 6–12.

²⁸ *The Prophet* (HBBibl, no. 33), 17v, l. 13–16, 18r, l. 20–21. In expounding Matthew 3:7–8, Bullinger describes Christ as »the author of unity not dissension«, who bound together »in the fellowship of the one body« (*Commentary on Matthew*, 31r, l. 25–27). »He commanded the apostles to unite the church through this doctrine of

The Church – Catholic and Holy

There is a broad picture of the church in many of his works, but Bullinger's view is presented most clearly and systematically in *Second Response to Cochlaeus*, *The Decades*, and *The Second Helvetic Confession*.²⁹ *The Decades* contains Bullinger's most comprehensive discussion of the church and it provides the most coherent presentation of his view of the church.³⁰ It is in a measure an exposition of the Apostles' Creed, which he sees as »a compendium of scripture«. ³¹ There is a brief consideration in the first decade and a more extended one in the fifth. Although his presentation reflects the words of the creed, the accents and emphases are Bullinger's.

He starts, as the creed, with the word »believe« and the distinction between »believing« and »believing in«, before turning to the church as catholic and holy. »Believing in« belongs only to God and not to what is created. In the creed, the words »believing in« apply to the Holy Spirit and not to the church or to the other phrases, such as the forgiveness of sins. In support, Bullinger draws on Cyprian, Augustine, Paschasius, Leo, and Aquinas to demonstrate the difference between believing in God and believing the church.³² In *The Christian Religion*, »Believing the church« means that we are »incorporated into this holy church, have communion with God and all his saints, and that within it we share in the Holy Spirit and all the holiness, which he has granted to his church, and so we are also truly holy.«³³

unity (salvation in Christ) in one body and gather it together through the sacraments [...] so that they may be one in Christ and there may be no dissensions and sects in the church [...]« (*Commentary on Matthew*, 31v, l. 43–48).

²⁹ For *Second Response to Cochlaeus*, see HBBibI, no. 160. There is a brief, but comprehensive picture of the church in *The Christian Religion* (97–100), in effect a more popular version of *The Decades*.

³⁰ Much of the substance is adumbrated in his *Second Response to Cochlaeus* in 1544.

³¹ RB 2/2, 316.7; RC, 268.

³² After citing Cyprian, who distinguishes the creator from what is created and what is divine from what is human, he quotes Paschasius' words »we believe the church, as the mother of regeneration; we do not believe in the church, as the author of salvation.« (HBTS 3, 100.30–31, 101.1–2; Harding, vol. 1, 159).

³³ *The Christian Religion*, 98r, l. 18–25.

Bullinger generally uses »church« of the Christian church, but he can refer to a Jewish or Muslim church.³⁴ Usually, however, he defines the church in terms of the faithful or the saints, but also occasionally in terms of the elect. (The words »believer« and »elect« are sometimes seemingly parallel terms in description of the church, as in *Firm Foundation*.)³⁵ In the fifth decade, the church is described as »the company of the faithful calling on the name of the Lord« or »all the faithful [...] in heaven and on earth«, »fellow heirs with the saints from Adam to the end of the world«, and »the faithful and elect of God«.³⁶ In the first decade Bullinger relates the church to faith, salvation, and the profession of Christ. He describes it as »the communion of all who profess the name of Christ«, »all the faithful«, and »all who are saved and shall be saved to the end of the world«.³⁷

Although the creed describes the church as holy and catholic. Bullinger begins with the word catholic, before giving a longer exposition of the church as holy. It is catholic in time – being both militant and triumphant. It extends across the ages, including those who lived before and after Christ, and embraces all the faithful from Adam himself to the last saint at the end of the world. It is also catholic or universal in space as well as time, and includes all particular churches, which are described as being »as it were members in one body under one head«.³⁸ Already in his *Comparison of Ancient and Contemporary Heresies* in 1526 he has contrasted the

³⁴ *The Christian Religion*, 98v, l. 7–13.

³⁵ *Firm Foundation* (HBBibl, no. 426), 35r, l. 17–21.

³⁶ HBTS 3, 740.20–21, 741.5–6, 742.22–25. – The double description of the church in terms of faith and holiness is clearly expressed in the exposition of Matthew 16:18: »The church is the assembly of all the truly faithful, who, grafted by faith in Christ, are being sanctified by the Spirit, and who live by the Spirit of Christ and do works of righteousness, sincerity, and love.« (*Commentary on Matthew*, 157r, l. 17–19). In *The Second Helvetic Confession*, the church is described first as »an assembly of the faithful« and then, reflecting the creed, as »a communion of all the saints«, a term which essentially elaborates the word »faithful« with the amplification of »being sanctified by the blood of the Son« or »who truly know and rightly worship and serve the true God [...] and who by faith share the benefits freely offered«. Later, in the same chapter Bullinger refers to those who enjoy Christ in the church as »the elect«. (RB 2/2, 310.14–18, 311.28–30; RC, 261, 266). The communion of saints is in effect »an explanation of what we understand by the church« (*The Christian Religion*, 100r, l. 26–28).

³⁷ HBTS 3, 101.21–22, 102.3–6; Harding, vol. 4, 161–162.

character of the church as catholic or universal in space with the Donatist limiting of the church in Africa and the limiting of it to those linked to Rome by papal preachers.³⁹

In *Questions of Religion*, Bullinger discusses the question whether the Roman church, as a local church, can be catholic or universal.⁴⁰ It is rather, he argues, that like other local churches, it is a member of the catholic church. It is also not catholic both because it is impure and because it lacks the signs of the true church. The word of truth is not only not preached in it, but it is forbidden and persecuted with sword and fire. It is new, and not the ancient Roman church.⁴¹

The reference to the catholic church as triumphant and militant, leads to a discussion of the church as holy. Unlike the church triumphant, the church militant is mixed. (Strictly speaking only the elect and faithful are members of the church militant »joined to Christ not only with outward bands or marks but also in spirit and truth, and sometimes by these and not by bands or marks«.) Bullinger distinguishes the visible church from the invisible church. Unlike God, we cannot judge who are elect and faithful. They are known or visible to him, but they are invisible or unknown to us, in the sense that we do not know what they are inwardly.⁴²

In the first decade, in a characteristically trinitarian way, Bullinger describes the church as holy, as it has been sanctified by God the Father in the blood of the Son and the gift of the Holy Spirit. The church is pure, not on its own account, but Christ's. It is not perfect while here on earth, but its holiness is »most perfect in

³⁸ HBTS 3, 100.6–102.2; Harding, vol. 1, 158–162. Compare HBTS 3, 741.5–742.21; Harding, vol. 4, 5–7.

³⁹ *Comparison of Ancient and Contemporary Heresies* (HBBibl, no. 1), c2r, l. 20–26.

⁴⁰ For *Bericht, wie die Verfolgten antworten sollen* (abbreviated as *Questions of Religion*), see HBBibl, nos. 386–393. I quote from the text in Pestalozzi (HBBibl, no. 391): Carl Pestalozzi, Heinrich Bullinger: *Leben und ausgewählte Schriften*. Nach handschriftlichen und gleichzeitigen Quellen, Elberfeld 1858, 526–549.

⁴¹ *Questions of Religion*, 529–531.

⁴² HBTS 3, 742.22–27, 748.5–14; Harding, vol. 4, 7, 17. – In *The Second Helvetic Confession* the terms visible and invisible are applied not only to an obviously visible church, as in Corinth, but to a situation in which the church seems to be extinct, as with the seven thousand unknown to Elijah, who had not worshipped Baal (RB 2/2, 315.13–23; RC, 266–267).

Christ«, for it has been washed by the blood of Christ (cf. John 13:10). This understanding of holiness is continued in Bullinger's reference to the communion of saints which expresses our communion with God and with others, and »our sharing in good and heavenly things«. ⁴³

The church is a mixed body, as we see in the parables of wheat and tares and good and bad fish. Bullinger recognizes, using the examples of David and Peter, that holy people can fall, but that, unlike Judas, who also fell, ⁴⁴ they do not totally forsake Christ. We cannot tell which is which, for we can judge only the outward appearance and not the inward reality. It is here that Bullinger and Anabaptists differ. ⁴⁵

In the fifth decade, Bullinger discusses this issue in examining whether the church may err. He argues that the church triumphant, unlike the church militant, can never err. The church militant, however, which includes the good and faithful and the evil and hypocrites, both errs and does not err in life and doctrine. ⁴⁶ The church does not err in doctrine and faith, »for it hears only the voice of the Shepherd«. Based on the foundation of the prophets and apostles, the church can be described as the pillar and ground of the truth. It errs, however, when »it turns from Christ and his word«. The Old Testament shows that the church can and does

⁴³ HBTS 3, 102.6–33; Harding, vol. 1, 162–163. – For *Opitz*, Heinrich Bullinger als Theologe, 419, the church is essentially the communion of the saints.

⁴⁴ In *The Second Helvetic Confession* he gives examples not only of Christians who fail, as Peter, but also of churches in which there are serious offences, as in Galatia and Corinth (RB 2/2, 315.9–13; RC, 266).

⁴⁵ HBTS 3, 745.35–746.17, 747.5–12, 747.36–748.5; Harding, vol. 4, 13–17.

⁴⁶ Bullinger discusses the issue in *The Origin of Error* (HBBibl, no. 10), dIv, l. 18 – dIv, l. 4. In response to those who say that the church cannot err, Bullinger states that the sheep who hear the voice of the shepherd belong to the Lord's sheepfold (dIv, l. 18–24). (The importance of »hearing the shepherd's voice« is evident in its constant use by Bullinger.) In *The Authority of the Bible* in replying to Cochlaeus, Bullinger challenges the view that the church without qualification cannot err, affirming that the church cannot err only as it is governed by the rule of canonical scripture which is inspired by the Holy Spirit (HBTS 4, 87.9–10, 88.25–27, 89.22–25). He also gives examples from the Old Testament of the church's erring by abandoning the light of God's word, which happens despite God's promises to dwell in them and be their God (HBTS 4, 91.27–92.21). Compare *Second Response to Cochlaeus*, 8v, l. 30–9r, l. 40. In *The Second Helvetic Confession* he expresses this succinctly. The church »does not err as long as it rests upon the rock Christ, and upon the foundation of the prophets and apostles«. (RB 2/2, 311.27–28; RC, 263).

err, when a part of it, having lost God's word, errs; it does not err altogether, inasmuch as some remnants are preserved by the grace of God, by whom the truth may flourish again [...]«. Paul could describe the churches of Corinth and Galatia, despite their failings, as »the holy churches of God«.

The church on earth errs in life, as it will never be free of sin. It will always have to pray »Forgive us our trespasses«. For Bullinger, there neither is nor will be any church on earth that is »without blemish«. At the same time the church, which has blemishes, can be described as pure, as without spot or wrinkle, because of God's mercy and forgiveness (Galatians 3:22); for on account of Christ's innocence such spots are not imputed to those who embrace Christ by faith. The church strives to have as few spots as possible, but it is »chiefly by the benefit of imputation« that the church is without spot or wrinkle.⁴⁷ The mixed character of the church militant raises the question of whether and, if so, how we can recognize such a mixed body as the church.

The Marks of the Church

There are two principal outward marks by which we may know the church militant: the sincere preaching of the word of God and the lawful partaking of the sacraments of Christ.⁴⁸ Bullinger sees Matthew 28:19, Ephesians 5:25–26, and Acts 2:38 as evidence that the New Testament regards word and sacrament as the means

⁴⁷ HBTS 3, 759.4–760.8, 760.27–33; Harding, vol. 4, 35–38.

⁴⁸ Bullinger notes that some add to word and sacrament: »zeal for godliness and unity, patience in suffering (*in cruce*), and calling on the name of God through Christ«, but he regards them as included in the others. He observes that in Acts 2:42 zeal for unity and love and calling on the name of God are with the eucharist joined to the sacrament of baptism, mentioned in other places (HBTS 3, 748.17–19, 748.37–749.1; Harding, vol. 4, 17–18). The church's suffering and the reasons for it are considered at length in *Persecution* (HBBibl, no. 575) in 1573. His *Sermons on the Apocalypse* was written for churches suffering persecution. He maintains that the true church always has been, is, and shall be subject to adversity and persecution. Bullinger uses the teaching of Jesus and the Book of Revelation both to show that suffering was prophesied and to offer consolation (a2r, l. 28 – a2v, l. 4, a5v, l. 6–29, b3v, l. 19 – b4r, l. 30). Suffering and indeed persecution are seen to be marks of the church throughout Bullinger's ministry, for example, in *The Testament*, 38v, l. 12 – 41v, l. 17.

Christ uses to establish a church and with further biblical testimonies he maintains that word and sacrament are outward marks of the church. »For these bring us into the society of the ecclesial body and keep us in it.«⁴⁹

In giving these traditional outward marks of the church, Bullinger does not exclude from the church all those without them. »For there are undoubtedly many in the world who do not hear the ordinary preaching of God's word, who do not come into the company of those who call on God, and who do not receive the sacraments.« Bullinger is not referring to those who despise these things, but those, such as the sick or imprisoned, who cannot have the word and sacrament that they desire. After citing the biblical precedent of the exile in Babylon, he also includes those, for example, in Persia and Arabia, who are deprived by Muslim ungodliness and cruelty. They are joined in the same spirit and the same faith with those who have the visible signs.⁵⁰ In *The Second Helvetic Confession*, Bullinger maintains that the church is not bound by its signs, so that those who do not share in the sacraments are outside the church. This was true in the Old Testament of those in exile in Babylon who were deprived of their sacrifices for seventy years.⁵¹

For Bullinger, however, it is not sufficient to state that word and sacrament are marks of the church, as the Arians had the word, but used it contrary to »the sense of scripture and the orthodox faith or the articles of the faith«. (Arians had the adulterated word, not the pure or sincere word of God.) Similarly, those who have the sacraments must use them lawfully, unlike Jeroboam. He did not sacrifice lawfully and was regarded as having defected from the true church. However, if heretics administer baptism in the threefold name to the catholic faith and not to error, it is »not the baptism of heretics but the baptism of the church«. Nevertheless, that does not make heretics the true church.⁵²

⁴⁹ HBTS 3, 748.16–17, 19–23, 28–34, 749.1–2, 17–19; Harding, vol. 4, 17–19.

⁵⁰ HBTS 3, 749.28–34, 750.8–17; Harding, vol. 4, 19–21.

⁵¹ RB 2/2, 315.1–9; RC, 266.

⁵² HBTS 3, 750.17–20, 23–36, 751.1–3, 6–11; Harding, vol. 4, 21–23. – In his exposition of Acts 2, Bullinger states that »the true, ancient and apostolic church« is the church which has scriptural teaching in which evil is challenged and penitence and the remission of sins are preached. He adds that we »do not doubt the church of Christ to

There are also inward marks of the church.⁵³ Unlike the outward marks which characterize the church militant with its mixture of believers and hypocrites, the inward marks belong only to the godly. They make the outward marks fruitful and they make people acceptable and pleasing to God where, by some necessity, the outward signs are missing. »They are the communion of the Spirit of the Lord, sincere faith, and twofold love.« (Later, he says that by these we can easily tell whether or not someone is »in the fellowship of the church«.) They unite the faithful to Christ the head and to the other members of the church. The New Testament teaches that »Christ is joined to us by his Spirit and we are bound to him by faith, so that he lives in us and we in him«. Christ gives us his Spirit and by the Spirit people »burn with the love of God«.⁵⁴

The word is a mark of the church, as it is from the word of God that the church is born and indeed built up and preserved. Bullinger supports this with a range of New Testament testimonies, such as »for faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God« (Romans 10:17), and it is by faith that we are made true members of Christ and his church. Bullinger contrasts this with the Roman view which, in effect by the role it gives to human decrees and doctrines, sets up a human church rather than the Christian church which is founded by Christ's word. It is for this reason that God

be« where we see baptism and the eucharist, prayer, fellowship, and love. (*Commentary on Acts* [HBBibl, no. 43], 37v, l. 8–20). He then contrasts these with their corrupt forms in the Church of Rome. *Fast*, Heinrich Bullinger und die Täufer, 143, is therefore mistaken in seeing Bullinger as moving towards the Anabaptists in 1560, where, besides referring to word and sacrament, he mentions prayer and love. He has stated this already in 1533 in his commentary on Acts.

⁵³ In *The Christian Religion* Bullinger gives a concentrated exposition of the church in the context of the creed (97v–100v). Perhaps for that reason, in mentioning the inward and outward marks of the church, he mentions the fellowship of the Spirit before the word through which it becomes the church. Although Bullinger often repeats what he has said in other works, he frequently includes new elements. Here the church is described as living in the fear of God, in love and unity with all people, particularly its fellow members and serving God with patience in suffering. These are given with penitence and amendment of life as signs of the church which one finds in Acts. (98v, l. 20 – 99r, l. 10).

⁵⁴ HBTS 3, 751.22–28, 32–35, 752.25–26, 753.27–28; Harding, vol. 4, 23–24, 26. – Faith, in the sense of trust in God's mercy and the outward confession of faith, unites us to each other as well as to Christ (HBTS 3, 752.30–39).

has given teachers »to found, build, maintain, and enlarge his church by his word, his word alone«. ⁵⁵

In *The Second Helvetic Confession* he emphasizes the word as the mark of the church, saying that the true church has »the signs or marks of the true church«, »especially the lawful and sincere preaching of the word of God as it was delivered to us in the book of the prophets and the apostles which all lead us to Christ«, who said in the gospel, »My sheep hear my voice [...]« (John 10:5, 27, 28). This is followed by a passage in which he mentions participation »in the sacraments, instituted by Christ, delivered to us by the apostles« and »used in no other way than as they received them from the Lord«. He mentions these, however, in the midst of several inward marks such as love. The word is, no doubt, emphasized as it leads to the true worship of the one God, and the seeking of salvation in Christ alone as mediator, intercessor, and head of the church. ⁵⁶

In the light of these two marks, Bullinger rejects the papal view that »they have a most certain mark of the apostolic church in the continued succession of bishops coming from St Peter [...] to Julius III [...]« Bullinger does not deny that »the sure succession of pastors in the primitive church was of great weight«, but argues that since the time of Gregory the Great the larger part of the bishops have not been true shepherds but devouring wolves, as Zechariah prophesied (Zechariah 11:15–17). Succession does not guarantee that a church is apostolic. An apostolic church is one which preserves the apostles' teaching through which the church »is preserved and will be spread till the end of the world«. Bullinger supports this by observing that the true prophets of God in the Old Testament did not stand in a continual succession of priests and yet those believing them are held to be the true church. Furthermore, Christ was opposed by those who were supported by the succession of high priests (*pontifices*), ⁵⁷ and yet they were not regarded as the true church; and the apostles also could not appeal to a succession of high priests, »and yet the church gathered by them is

⁵⁵ HBTS 3, 753.34–36, 754.1–6, 23–25, 755.4–6; Harding, vol. 4, 26–28.

⁵⁶ RB 2/2, 314.1–20; RC, 265.

⁵⁷ The word »pontifex« is used for high priests as well as for popes. See, for example, *Commentary on Luke* (HBBibl, no. 173), 128r, l. 39–42 and 130v, l. 32–38.

recognized by everyone to be the true and holy church«. Characteristically, by reference to Tertullian, Bullinger draws on patristic as well as biblical testimony in support of the apostolicity of churches which do not have a succession of bishops, but whose teaching is that of the apostles.⁵⁸

In *Questions of Religion*, Bullinger responds to the question how one can recognise the true Christian church. He does not answer by giving the external and internal marks but combines them in a distinctive way. With biblical references he states that we recognize it »primarily by true faith and the pure word of God, by love and innocence and the amendment of life and by the constant and patient calling on the name of God«. He then adds the sacraments which are, however, not present in some situations – and that is why he has given first place to the others.⁵⁹ He rejects the papal view that one can recognize the true church by the succession of bishops, as can be seen by the succession of high priests in the Old Testament. It is conformity with the teaching of the apostles which makes the church apostolic. Acts 20 warns that some of those succeeding the apostles would be wolves.⁶⁰

In *The Second Helvetic Confession* Bullinger rejects unity and antiquity, as well as the succession of bishops, as marks of the church. He does not there elaborate antiquity. Unity refers to the charge that the evangelicals were divided, unlike the Roman Church with its one head, the pope. Bullinger replies by pointing to the Roman church's »sects, contentions, and quarrels«. He emphasizes that there was no disorder in the church before there was a pope and that »God was in the apostolic church and that it was a true church, even though there were disputes and dissensions in it«. Moreover, the »most distinguished doctors of the church have differed among themselves on important matters [...] without the church's ceasing to be the church«. ⁶¹

⁵⁸ HBTS 3, 755.8–10, 16–20, 755.33–756.2, 756.9–22, 756.38–757.3; Harding, vol. 4, 28–32.

⁵⁹ *Questions of Religion*, 526–527.

⁶⁰ *Questions of Religion*, 526–529.

⁶¹ RB 2/2, 313.1–5, 9–24, 314.20–23; RC, 264–265.

The Church as One

In a separate sermon Bullinger describes the church as one, a word not used in the Apostles' Creed. The church is one in the senses he has already stated – before Christ and after Christ, on earth and in heaven.⁶² After two brief biblical references, Bullinger draws on Cyprian and Lactantius to argue his case for the church as one, even when it spreads throughout the world. It is like a tree with many branches or a spring with many streams. Indeed, the church is called catholic or universal, because all these members are united perpetually in one body under one head Christ. The church is one: both the church militant and the church triumphant and the church before Christ's coming and the church after his coming. Drawing on Augustine, he argues that the fact that the church is mixed does not make two churches any more than having traitors and true citizens in a nation makes two nations. Therefore when people depart from the church they do not destroy its unity, but leave it purer. He cites Cyprian and Lactantius to support his view that there is no salvation and no people acceptable to God outside the church. »Whoever is separated from the church is joined to an adulteress.«⁶³

Bullinger does not, as elsewhere, discuss why there is only one church. In *Perfection* the unity of the church derives from there being »one God, one saviour, one faith, one baptism«.⁶⁴ In *The Second Helvetic Confession* he gives a comprehensive account of why there is one church: »And since there is always one God, and

⁶² The sense of the church as one is expressed in part in various ways and contexts in his early writings. There is one church before and after Christ as there is one covenant. In *Reply to Burchard* the covenant is one and eternal, and so »we and the ancients before Christ are one people, one church, with one God, covenant, and faith« (HBTS 2, 151.31–33). The constant affirmation that there is one church before and after Christ is related, but not limited to Bullinger's understanding of the covenant. In 1525 in a reply to Bullinger, Leo Jud cites Lactantius' reference to »one church of those before and those after Christ who are saved by the one Christ« (HBBW 1, 81.19–22; cf. HBTS 2, 78.27–79.7).

⁶³ HBTS 3, 767.26–769.24; Harding, vol. 4, 49–52. – There is a possible qualification in *The Second Helvetic Confession* in the words »no certain salvation«. It states that »as there was no salvation outside Noah's ark [...] so, there is no certain salvation outside Christ« (RB 2/2, 314.26–31; RC, 266).

⁶⁴ *Perfection*, 59.12–14.

one mediator between God and people, Jesus the Messiah, and one shepherd of the whole flock, one head of this body, and, to conclude, one Spirit, one salvation, one faith, one testament or covenant, it necessarily follows that there is only one church.«⁶⁵ He expresses this more succinctly in *Two Sermons* where he states that the unity of the church is from God and disunity from the devil.⁶⁶ The fact that there are two people (Jews and Gentiles) and two Testaments (Old and New) does not make two churches, any more than the fact that there is a church militant (with many particular churches) and a church triumphant. »There is salvation in one Messiah, in whom they are united as members of one body under one head, in the same faith, and sharing in the same spiritual food and drink.« As the body of Christ they all receive life from Christ, the head.⁶⁷

There is an extended discussion of the unity of the church in *Questions of Religion*, written by Bullinger to help those who are persecuted to answer questions put to them. It is part of his answer to questions whether there is salvation outside the Roman church and whether those who intentionally separate from it are to be regarded as heretics and apostates. He maintains that in German and Hebrew the word heretic is related to separation and that in Latin it is expounded similarly by the word sect. Where separation or heresy occurs there must have been unity. In the light of Matthew 10:34–35 and the separation of the apostles from Judaism, Bullinger holds that there can be a false unity. He is concerned, however, to examine true unity. »As there is one God, one world, one Son and so on, so there is only one divine truth, only one true Christian faith and only one universal Christian church, in which all believers obey and adhere to the divine truth alone, love the one true God with all their heart and soul and strength, adore, invoke, and worship him alone.« Bullinger expounds this further in terms of Christ as the only saviour in whom there is fullness or perfection. Believers »have everything in Christ alone and need and de-

⁶⁵ RB 2/2, 310.25–29; RC, 262. – The unity of the church in *The Christian Religion* is related to the one God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (100r, l. 17–21). In *The Institution of the Eucharist*, it is related to the Spirit (HBTS 2, 102.11–12).

⁶⁶ *Two Sermons* (HBBibl, no. 582), 27r, l. 25 – 27v, l. 10.

⁶⁷ RB 2/2, 311.3–6, 11–12, 14–19, 312.3–5; RC, 262–263.

sire nothing more«. They trust »in the Father alone, through Jesus Christ, God's Son, in the power of the Holy Spirit«. Through the sacraments they pledge themselves to God and his church and serve one another in love.⁶⁸

The church in the Old Testament was also one. God gave one law, one covenant, one temple, one sacrifice, one priesthood. Moreover, they had their sacraments which »served this unity, so that they were one people under one God and one faith«. Bullinger maintains that Jeroboam divided the one and only congregation, withdrawing the ten tribes from the one temple and sacrifice, and from the prescribed worship, and following his own pleasure he built two churches or temples, with idols. After him came Ahab who led them even further from unity. A comparable disunity occurred in the early church as people, for example, rejected doctrines such as the trinity and asserted human merit against divine grace. Bullinger compares this with the Roman church's preferring its own views to God's word, invoking created things and not God alone, and denying that salvation is in Christ alone. The reformers would have been heretics and dividers of the church if they had done these things, but in fact they have been engaged in restoring »the ancient and first simplicity and unity of the true faith and of the true Christian and apostolic church«. This led them to leave the Roman church, but not the ancient Roman church.⁶⁹

Bullinger's emphasis on the unity of the church presents him with a double challenge: to convict the Anabaptists for separating from the church, while defending the apparent separation of evangelicals from the church. Anabaptists separate because the church's life and teaching are not pure, its discipline is not strict enough, and its ministers are marred by faults and vices.⁷⁰ These are wrong reasons for separating. They lead Bullinger to outline the right and the wrong reasons for separation from the church in relation to the teaching, life, and discipline of the church.

Bullinger allows that one may separate where the teaching of an immutable doctrine of the church is at stake, such as the doctrines of the creed and the doctrines of salvation, for example, justifica-

⁶⁸ *Questions of Religion*, 535–537.

⁶⁹ *Questions of Religion*, 537–539.

⁷⁰ HBTS 3, 769.36–770.4; Harding, vol. 4, 52–53.

tion by faith. When, however, the scriptures are expounded and applied, what is fundamental is that nothing is said »contrary to the truth of the faith or the love of God and our neighbours«. Bullinger maintains that there will be diversity in interpretation, but such diversity is not a reason for separation.⁷¹ Moreover, following Augustine, Bullinger argues that even if someone errs grossly in interpretation, one may admonish the person, but still not separate from the church. Similarly, applying Christ's word in Matthew 23:2-3, Bullinger states that a minister's life is not a ground for separation, while the minister teaches faithfully and distributes the two sacraments lawfully. It is different if a minister does not teach the faith rightly. Christ commands us to flee from false prophets, which means from false doctrine, not from evil life. There are two other matters which do not justify separation: diversity in ceremonies and impurity in members' lives, which pollutes other people. Bullinger maintains that there has always been diversity in ceremonies and quotes Socrates, Irenaeus, and Augustine to show that in the early church there was unity despite great diversity,⁷² and that Paul in the case of Corinth and Jesus himself with Judas did not regard a person's evil life as a reason for separating from the church. Typically Bullinger concludes his case by combining scripture and the early church. He quotes Cyprian's charging those who judge in this way with usurping the role which the Father has given to the Son.⁷³

Bullinger has to defend his understanding of the church in two directions: against »defenders of the Roman monarchy« and against Anabaptists. He is charged by the former of a crime similar to the one he condemns in the latter. Their charge is of having deserted the old Roman church in which scripture has authority

⁷¹ Bullinger distinguishes what Paul commands in 2 Thessalonians 3:6 from what the Anabaptists do, for they in separating from the church set up a private church (*Commentary on 2 Thessalonians* [HBBibl, no. 81], 85r, l. 13-17).

⁷² This is expressed rather differently in *The Second Helvetic Confession* which states both that diversity in rites does not dissolve the unity of the church and that unity does not lie in rites and ceremonies but in the truth and unity of the catholic faith (RB 2/2, 316.3-13, RC, 267-268). There are differences between the church in the Old Testament and the church in the New, but they are parts of the one church. Therefore many differences, for example, in ceremonies, can exist without division.

⁷³ HBTS 3, 770.12-17, 771.7-9, 27-29, 771.37-772.2, 772.9-11, 13-14, 27-28, 32-34, 773.7-8, 18-20, 774.1-2, 14-16, 775.13-16; Harding, vol. 4, 53-62.

and the sacraments have their place, simply because of the faults of some of the bishops and priests. This leads Bullinger to define heretics and schismatics and to argue that evangelicals are neither.⁷⁴

Following Augustine, he relates heretics to doctrine and schismatics to separation. Heretics are further described as advancing and spreading strange views, contrary to scripture, the articles of faith, and doctrines based on God's word. Bullinger defines what it is to be Christian and catholic in terms of the imperial edict as continuing the religion (concerning the trinity) that St Peter taught at Rome and which Damasus and Peter of Alexandria also taught. In describing schismatics, Bullinger adds the gathering and joining of other congregations to the fundamental idea of separation. Bullinger insists that it is because of their fidelity to scripture and the councils of the church, that evangelicals reject the pope's false teaching and his new unscriptural decrees, as well as papal abuses and corruption. »We flee and reject their tyranny and anti-Christianity, but we do not reject Christ and his yoke, nor flee the fellowship of the saints.« »Escaping from the papal church we are gathered into the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church.«⁷⁵ In writing on the papal bull against Elizabeth, he maintains that to be true catholics people must leave the Roman church which has departed from the faith and practice of the apostolic and primitive church and join evangelicals who are true catholics.⁷⁶

Bullinger distinguishes the old apostolic Roman church, to which his opponents appeal, from the present Roman church. He identifies with the former, but rejects the latter. He does not recognize this church, which »acknowledges and worships the pope as Christ's vicar on earth and obeys his laws, to be the true church of Christ«. At the same time he judges that there are many in that church »who worship Christ and have kept themselves free from papal pollution«. Despite its claims this new Roman church does

⁷⁴ HBTS 3, 775.20-35; Harding, vol. 4, 62-63.

⁷⁵ HBTS 3, 775.35-776.15, 776.18-20, 28-35; Harding, vol. 4, 63-65. – In the preface to *Commentary on Luke*, Bullinger maintains that those who believe that Christ is the head of the church shrink from the pope (AA4v, l. 24-25). He later states, »The faith of Peter and the faith of the pope, the teaching of Peter and the teaching of the pope are diametrically opposed.« (128r, l. 39-40).

⁷⁶ *A Confutation of the Pope's Bull* (HBBibl, no. 562), 52r, l. 16 – 53v, l. 3.

not have the outward or inward marks of the church. Indeed, it cannot be tolerated as one tolerates hypocrites and evil people in the church, because »the Romanists are the worst and most cruel enemies of Christ's truth, openly blaspheming the gospel and persecuting believers in Christ«. They subject the bible and its interpretation to the pope, so that they reject as heretics those who, like scripture, call Christ the only head of the church, unless they add the pope to be the head of the church on earth.⁷⁷ Bullinger maintains that this and other examples show that the Roman church is destitute of the word of God and therefore »is not the true church of Christ«. He also rejects Roman administration of the Lord's Supper, but not their administration of baptism. Therefore in his judgement the Roman church lacks both the outward and inward marks of the church.⁷⁸

It is fundamental for Bullinger that the church of God has existed from the beginning and does not cease when leaders of the church, as in the church of Rome, prove faithless. He argues this with five examples from the Old Testament, when word and sacrament, the outward signs of the church, were suppressed. At these times God sent prophets, such as Elijah, who spoke his word, although they were not acknowledged by the leaders. God also had a remnant who remained faithful, such as the seven thousand who had not bowed the knee to Baal. This faithful remnant might be unknown to others, as the seven thousand were unknown to Elijah. However, despite the suppression of word and sacrament, they partook of all the gifts of God through faith.⁷⁹

With these biblical precedents, Bullinger is able to argue that God has a church on earth, although the Roman church is not the church. Everywhere there have been some who have »acknowledged Christ the Lord to be the only author of salvation«. More-

⁷⁷ Bullinger gives further examples of where Rome calls heretics those who hold what scripture teaches (HBTS 3, 785.10-13; Harding, vol. 4, 68). Generally Bullinger simply contrasts the pope's claiming to be head of the church with Christ's being the only head of the church, which is his body. But he also rejects the view that the pope saves the church from disorder. For Bullinger, the government of the church handed down by the apostles maintained order in the early church (RB 2/2, 313.1-8; RC, 264).

⁷⁸ HBTS 3, 777.4-5, 10-15, 24-27, 778.1-2, 18-20, 779.3-4, 7-8; Harding, vol. 4, 65-69.

⁷⁹ HBTS 3, 779.19-21, 780.15-781.1; Harding, vol. 4, 69-72.

over, in almost every age, God has sent »godly and learned men« »who challenge the tyranny of the pope, demanding the purging of the church from papal corruptions, and teaching the true doctrine of salvation and the true use of the sacraments«. Nevertheless, the pope condemned, excommunicated, and even killed those »who preached the word of God and demanded the reformation of the church«. (This opposition was, indeed, foretold by Christ and by the prophets and apostles.) However, people could still be saved in this unreformed church, because, for example, the Apostles' Creed (»the most perfect rule of saving faith«) was recited to the dying. Moreover, God, who saved the thief on the cross, would undoubtedly have mercy on those oppressed by anti-Christ and teach them by the Holy Spirit.⁸⁰ Bullinger supports the reformation of the church of his day, by reference to biblical and especially apostolic precedent, arguing indeed for a reformation in the likeness of the apostolic church.⁸¹ At the same time, however, he defends withdrawal from the church.

In his letter to Edward VI, Bullinger rejoices at »the renovation of religion« in England and argues that there is no need to wait for a general council to reform the church. His case is negative (the precedent of medieval councils) and positive (the example of Josiah and the early church). He describes medieval councils as having led to superstition and error in doctrine and corruption rather than to amendment or reformation in the church, as they did not accept the authority of God's word. In particular he attacks the role of Rome which ultimately determines the councils' outcome. In any council it called, Rome would rather that the gospel, along with Christ and the true church, perished than forgo its decrees, rites, authority, or wealth. By contrast Josiah called a council of princes and priests and did not refer the judgement to the high priest, but submitted himself to the law of God without paying any regard to ancient custom. He defends the calling of in effect a local council by the precedent of the early church, with its provincial councils, and in particular of Cyprian. They dealt with matters of faith and

⁸⁰ HBTS 3, 781.13-21, 27-31, 782.16-20; Harding, vol. 4, 72-74.

⁸¹ HBTS 3, 783.19-25; Harding, vol. 4, 76.

the reformation of the churches and, moreover, made no mention of the Bishop of Rome.⁸²

Bullinger defends the withdrawal of evangelicals from the Roman church as »lawful and necessary« for salvation. He cites the words of Christ and the apostles »to flee from anti-Christ, idolatry, and false prophets«. He contrasts this with other types of withdrawal, such as apostasy, schism, and heresy. He gives examples of each of them, citing apostates, such as Julian, schismatics, such as the Donatists, and heretics, such as Arius. The evangelical withdrawal is »not from the true, but from the false church«. It is »not from the people of God, but from the persecutors of God's people«. It is »not from the articles of the faith and the sound doctrine of the church, but from errors which obscure« them. It is »not for innovation [...] but for the recovery of the true faith«. It is leaving the fellowship of darkness to be »with Christ, the true light«, forsaking the false doctrine of Rome »for the doctrine of the gospel and the apostles, and for Christ the head of the church«.⁸³

Unity was a pastoral as well as a theological issue, as is evident in *Firm Foundation*. Its extended title indicates that it was written to inform and console simple Christians at a time when there were many divisions and when scholars were in conflict. He argues that Christ and the apostles prophesied discord in matters of the faith and that there were divisions between the Roman and evangelical churches and even among evangelicals, leading to the names Lutheran and Zwinglian.⁸⁴ There were, however, disputes also in the early church about the faith.⁸⁵

Bullinger faces the challenge of those who hold that as God is a God of peace and not of discord and as there is discord among evangelicals, evangelicals are not a church and their teaching and faith are false. Bullinger responds by distinguishing between »the necessary chief points« of the faith and »the teaching and articles on which people's salvation does not primarily depend«. He holds

⁸² HBTS 3, 557-561; Harding, vol. 3, 115-122.

⁸³ HBTS 3, 783.25-29, 784.13-785.9; Harding, vol. 4, 76-78.

⁸⁴ *Firm Foundation*, II, l. 11-14, l. 20. - Bullinger maintains that there are divisions in the Roman churches, for example, between Thomists and Scotists (5r, l. 25-29).

⁸⁵ *Firm Foundation*, 4r, l. 22 - 4v, l. 12. - Bullinger notes that Clement of Alexandria records that Jews accused Christians of being divided and therefore wrong, whereas Jews were united (4r, l. 22-27).

that all true believers are agreed on the chief articles or given a little time will be.⁸⁶ Bullinger employs a variety of defence from analogies, such as the unity of a married couple who disagree on some household matters. He outlines a series of divisions in the New Testament, such as those between Paul and Peter, and Paul and Barnabas, and those among Christians in Corinth; and also divisions in the early church between many of the fathers.⁸⁷ Bullinger does not regard discord as good nor does he seek to defend it.⁸⁸ He gives examples from the early church to offer consolation to simple, godly people, who are troubled by the disputes among theologians. He exhorts them to pray God to bring peace and unity, as he did in the past. Besides praying, they should turn their gaze away from the disputes and not let contradictory opinions turn them from Christ.⁸⁹

Images of the Church

In presenting particular doctrines, Bullinger often expounds some of the biblical terms used of them.⁹⁰ He does this with the church, with images such as house, vine, and body.⁹¹ These images show his high doctrine of the church in the intimate way they relate God to the church. God builds the church, though he also uses people to help in the building. Christ is its foundation, and also its cornerstone. Perhaps most important is his maintaining that »just as a

⁸⁶ *Firm Foundation*, 5v, l. 14 – 6r, l. 12.

⁸⁷ *Firm Foundation*, 6v, l. 1 – 9v, l. 24.

⁸⁸ In *The Second Helvetic Confession*, he adds the Pauline reason for dissension in the church: »It pleases God to use dissensions in the church to the glory of his name, to illustrate the truth, and so that those who are in the right may be manifest« (RB 2/2, 313.24–26; RC, 265).

⁸⁹ *Firm Foundation*, 10r, l. 1 – 10v, l. 17.

⁹⁰ *Büsser*, *Die Stadt auf dem Berg*, 31–32, draws attention to the medieval character of Bullinger's use of a variety of biblical images for the church. He observes that Calvin used only two images of the church (as body of Christ and mother) compared with Bullinger's use of several.

⁹¹ Bullinger uses the word parable (HBTS 3, 785.10–13; Harding, vol. 4, 68). The order of the images varies. In *The Second Helvetic Confession*, it is temple or house, bride, flock, and body (RB 2/2, 311.23–312.2; RC, 263). In *The Christian Religion*, it is sheepfold, body, bride, house, and pillar (99v, l. 2–29).

house is dwelt in by people, so God dwells in the church«. ⁹² Some of these images, such as the body, are directly related to Christ. But some which are not as directly related to him, such as the house and the temple are expounded in relation to Christ. Thus Christ is the foundation of the house, and he is related to the temple as the pillars upholding it and the entrance into it. ⁹³ The image of the vine and branches abiding in each other is directly related to Christ, as is that of the body, of which Christ is the head. ⁹⁴ The body has its life from the head, and without the head the body is dead. Moreover, the head is joined to the members through grace and the Spirit. Through the Spirit he is always present, and so he has no need of a vicar. »Where, therefore, a vicar of Christ is acknowledged, no Christ is there, and therefore anti-Christ reigns in that place.« ⁹⁵

The image of marriage has a similar force. ⁹⁶ In the union of Christ and his church, which as a pure virgin, loves him alone, there is a sharing. He takes believers' weakness, sin, and death and gives his justification, sanctification, and life, so that they may be

⁹² HBTS 3, 785.30-33, 786.5-6, 9, 787.28-29; Harding, vol. 4, 79-80, 82. – In commenting on the kingdom of heaven in 3:1, Bullinger states, »For the church is the house of the living God, the temple of the Holy Spirit, in which God lives and reigns.« (*Commentary on Matthew*, 27r, l. 49-50).

⁹³ HBTS 3, 786.9-787.12, 787.23-31; Harding, vol. 4, 80-83.

⁹⁴ The figure of the body and head as well as that of the foundation of the church are used against the Church of Rome and the role of the pope. Bullinger also contrasts the papal view of »Roman monarchy« with Christ's vision of servant leadership and his refusal of a crown, supporting this with Jerome's regarding bishops and elders as equal. The image of shepherd and sheepfold points to Christ as the only shepherd of the universal church. He commits to Peter ministry and not sovereignty and Peter reminds his fellow elders that they are examples to the flock, not lords over it. Bullinger then quotes Gregory's rejection of the title of universal pastor, which belongs to Christ, but which is claimed by the pope: »whoever calls himself universal priest is a forerunner of anti-Christ«. (HBTS 3, 789.13-790.6, 790.20-792.10; Harding, vol. 4, 85-89).

⁹⁵ HBTS 3, 788.36-789.1, 789.7-8, 11-16; Harding, vol. 4, 84-85.

⁹⁶ Already in his *Reply to Burchard*, Bullinger uses the image of the church as the bride of Christ (HBTS 2, 147.25-26). *Selderhuis*, Kirche, 520-523, emphasizes the eschatological dimension in the presentation of the church in *Sermons on the Apocalypse*. This is related of course to the text of the Apocalypse. In it the image of the marriage of the church to Christ with the need for us to prepare to meet the bridegroom gives an eschatological accent to Bullinger's use of this image. Indeed our whole life is spent preparing for this (*Sermons on the Apocalypse*, 252.32-34; English translation 565). The eschatological dimension is already present in *The First Helvetic Confession*, related to Ephesians 5:27 (RB 1/2, 49.5-9; RC, 105).

just and holy and may live through him. Moreover, through the union with Christ (and the seed of his word) the church as a mother begets children. The church of Rome, by contrast with the true church, receives and hands on a new teaching which is alien to the word of God and begets many children, not to Christ but to anti-Christ.⁹⁷

Christ and the Church

Throughout his works, Bullinger emphasizes the inseparable link between Christ and the church. Staedtke notes that this is characteristic of the early Bullinger.⁹⁸ It is at the heart of Bullinger's critique of the teaching and practice of the Roman church. The church is described as those who believe in Christ and those who hear the shepherd's voice (John 10:3). Christ is »the only head of the church«, and therefore the church does not »need a vicar«, which the Bishop of Rome claims to be. »Believers in Christ« are called »a house of the living God« for »God dwells in their hearts as in a house or temple«. It is Christ's sacrificial death which makes them priests. Twenty years later in *The Decades*, in expounding images of the church, he emphasizes that it is inseparable from Christ. With the image of the body, he states, »Christ is never separated from the church; nor does it live other than from Christ. Although he is absent in body from the church, he is however most present in the Spirit and in operation and government, so that he needs no vicar on earth. He alone governs and remains for ever the only head, the only king, the only priest and saviour of his church.«⁹⁹ There is a similar emphasis some twenty years after *The Decades* in his commentary on Isaiah. In it Bullinger maintains

⁹⁷ HBTS 3, 792.13-15, 30-36, 793.3-6, 16-19, 794.1-3; Harding, vol. 4, 90-92.

⁹⁸ Staedtke, *Die Theologie des jungen Bullinger*, 216-220.

⁹⁹ HBTS 3, 789.12-16; Harding, vol. 4, 85.- The intimate relation of Christ and the church is evident in *Firm Foundation* in 1563. The chapter on the church begins with Christ's teaching as its only head, lord, shepherd, bridegroom, and ruler. The church is the congregation of all believers, founded on Christ the rock. They are the sheep who hear the shepherd's voice. They are members of Christ and are content with his teaching. Elsewhere it is said to have all fullness in Christ. (34v, l. 13 - 35v, l. 15, 13r, l. 8-17).

that »That is the true church, the congregation or assembly of all the faithful which rests on the foundation Christ, on whom alone it depends as its head, to whom alone it listens and whom alone it obeys in true faith, nor does it have any communion with strangers.«¹⁰⁰

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Abstract: The church is central to, but not the centre of Heinrich Bullinger's theology. There is for him no salvation outside the church and salvation is itself ecclesial as well as personal. The article considers the main contexts in which Bullinger expounds his understanding of the church and the major areas of disagreement: scripture, salvation, unity, and catholicity with his Roman and Anabaptist opponents, but also holiness with Anabaptists. The issues involved in these areas differ according to the context, for example, with Roman opponents the authority of scripture over and against that of the church, but with Anabaptists the authority of the Old Testament alongside the New. In his exposition of the outward marks of the church, Bullinger mostly points to word and sacrament, through which Christ establishes the church, although the emphasis is on the word. He also mentions other marks, such as suffering. The inward marks are the Holy Spirit, faith, and love. Characteristically, Bullinger draws on a range of biblical passages in his exposition, including the various biblical images of the church, but with his Roman opponents he also adduces the support of the fathers.

Keywords: Heinrich Bullinger, Ecclesiology

¹⁰⁰ *Commentary on Isaiah* (HBBibI, no. 558), 12v, l. 27–30.