

Heinrich Bullinger (1504–1575): Life - Thought - Influence

BY TORRANCE KIRBY

Throughout the year 2004 a Quincentenary Jubilee was held in Zurich to mark the birth of Heinrich Bullinger, Swiss Reformer and successor (*Der Nachfolger*) to Huldrych Zwingli after the latter's death at the battle of Kappel in 1531. Bullinger served as Antistes (Chief Pastor) of the Church of Zurich from that date until his own death in 1575, thus ensuring that he would stand as a figure of continuity through the manifold upheavals, both theological and political, of the mid-sixteenth century. For an English-speaking audience it is perhaps worth noting that Bullinger's life-span coincides exactly with that of Matthew Parker (also 1504–1575), the first reformed Archbishop of Canterbury under Elizabeth Tudor. Bullinger was among the most influential of all sixteenth-century Protestant reformers of the second generation. As the author of the *Second Helvetic Confession* he formulated what is agreed to be the most significant and lasting international standard of Reformed doctrinal orthodoxy. Throughout his long career Bullinger sustained a vast correspondence with adherents of religious reform throughout Europe. So it was highly appropriate that among the highlights of the quinquennial festivities there should be an International Congress hosted by The Institute for Swiss Reformation History at the University of Zurich and attended by a sizable contingent of scholars from across the globe: from Germany, France, Belgium, the Netherlands, Hungary, England, Scotland, Canada, the United States, and beyond. The Congress, titled 'Heinrich Bullinger (1504–1575): Life, Thought, Influence' enjoyed the most generous hospitality of the community of scholars of the *Schola Tigurina*, the Institute for Swiss Reformation History, the *Zwingliverein*, and the Council of Zurich itself over the space of four days at the end of August 2004. Those in attendance gathered daily to hear more than sixty learned contributions, some of them major lectures and others shorter papers. A great many aspects of Bullinger's life, thought, and influence were addressed, and a sizable number of these, as might be expected, took up his voluminous theological *œuvre*. Bullinger was particularly famous for his five 'Decades' of sermons, which stand beside Calvin's *Institutes of the Christian Religion* and the *Commonplaces* of Peter Martyr Vermigli as one of the most distinguished and influential contributions to Reformed theology in the sixteenth century.

Summary of Papers

1. **Lyle D. Bierma**, Professor of Systematic Theology at Calvin Theological Seminary in Grand Rapids, Michigan, addressed the systematic character of Bullinger's theology in his paper «Bullinger's Influence upon the *Heidelberg Catechism*.» Bierma demonstrated that Bullinger has long competed with Calvin and Melancthon for the distinction of theological father of the *Heidelberg Catechism*, the widely used method of instruction in the principles of the Christian religion. Bullinger had frequent contacts with Heidelberg in the course of the Reformation in the Palatinate, and played a part in training Zacharias Ursinus, principal author of the Catechism. Bullinger's protégé Thomas Erastus was also a member of the Catechism drafting committee. Moreover, another joint-author of the Catechism, Caspar Olevianus, testifies to the assistance of the Swiss reformers in the drafting. Internal textual evidence of Bullinger's role is more ambiguous. The Catechism, however, does not promote any of the distinctive features of Bullinger's Eucharistic doctrine nor does it reject distinctively Calvinist and Melancthonian features. Bierma concluded that while the influence of Bullinger on the Catechism cannot be doubted, identifying precisely where in the text that influence can be found is very difficult indeed. (Perhaps this very anonymity is itself Bullinger's peculiar mark and a subtle contributing factor to the Catechism's long-term success.)

2. **Jean-Pierre Delville**, professeur à la Faculté de Théologie, Louvain-la-Neuve, offered a paper on the theme of **scriptural hermeneutics**: «Bullinger et l'exégèse d'une parabole (1542): une comparaison avec ses contemporains» and chose as a particular example the reformer's commentary on Matthew 20: 1–16, the parable of the workers in the vineyard. Delville shows that Bullinger's approach manifests a synthesis of tendencies in sixteenth-century exegetical practice. Bullinger integrated the complete Latin text of Erasmus into his commentary and explicitly identifies his hermeneutical approach with Luther's. Delville argued that Bullinger's orientation appears «plus pastorale que polémique» and, moreover, that this approach aims ultimately at the inward conversion of the reader. Bullinger deliberately avoids the polemical tone employed by other Protestant exegetes such as, for example, Melancthon and Bucer and thus the Zurichers manifests «une côté plus iréniste et plus humaniste.» Delville concluded by noting Bullinger's marked influence on the exegetical technique of Musculus, Estienne, Calvin, Marlorat, Guillaud and Jansenius.

3. Dr. **Mark Elliott**, a Teaching Fellow in Church History at St Mary's College, University of St. Andrews in Scotland, addressed the theme of Bullinger's **exegesis** in his paper «Biblical commentary and the prophetic covenant

in Bullinger, with reference to Oecolampadius,» the Basel preacher who worked with Erasmus on the Greek New Testament and who became a close associate of Zwingli. Elliott noted that in the exegesis of Oecolampadius the notion of testament is superimposed on that of *foedus* or covenant. Like Oecolampadius, Bullinger emphasizes the unity of the covenant. He saw prophetic texts in their most significant aspect as pointing forward not to a new covenant *per se*, but rather to a new mode of the one eternal covenant. On this view, Isaiah for Bullinger is an apostle and an evangelist as much as he is a prophet. Bullinger did not hold that the covenant's conditions on the side of the believer were easily fulfilled. Attempting obedience to the law, therefore, is properly to be understood as doing penance for spiritual dereliction rather than as a positive contribution to salvation. Methodologically, Bullinger follows Oecolampadius in establishing the foundations of his doctrinal formulations in biblical commentary.

4. Dr. **Mark Taplin**, a scholar from Edinburgh, Scotland, spoke on the radical challenge to **Trinitarian orthodoxy** faced directly by Bullinger in his paper «Orthodoxy and dissent in Bullinger's Zurich: the case of Bernardino Ochino.» While scholars remain divided over this famous Italian evangelical's theological position – some see him as a fundamentally orthodox reformer, while others associate him with more radical currents of thought – Taplin sought in his paper to identify areas of tension between Ochino and an emerging Reformed orthodoxy, with particular reference to his treatment of the doctrine of the Trinity, the relationship between justification and sanctification, the punishment of heretics, as well as to Ochino's infamous «dialogue on polygamy.» Bullinger's support for the decision to dismiss Ochino reflected his awareness of the threat to Reformed unity posed by the activity of «heretics» and provides clear evidence of a marked shift in his approach to the handling of theological dissidents by the instrument of requiring assent to fundamental doctrine in addition to outward religious conformity. Taplin concluded with the reflection that Bullinger's critique of Ochino's teachings contributed significantly to the latter's posthumous reputation as a religious radical and anti-trinitarian.

5. **Willem van t'Spijker**, Professor of Church History and Canon Law at the Theologische Universiteit at Apeldoorn in the Netherlands, took up one of the central themes of Bullinger scholarship, namely «Bullinger as a Covenant Theologian.» Can Bullinger be adequately described as a **covenant** theologian, van t'Spijker asked? How, moreover, does the conception of covenant function in his theology as a whole? He emphasized the importance of the early Church Fathers, of medieval theology, and also of the Anabaptists with their own contrary consideration of covenant and baptism, in the shaping and development of Bullinger's own position and went on to compare this

stance to the formulations of Zwingli, Oecolampadius, Bucer, Capito, Cellarius, and Calvin. The impact of Melancthon in particular on the thinking of the covenant theologians of the second and third generation raises the question whether one can speak of an unimpeded development or, alternatively, of a distinct change in the course of Reformed theology. Taking into consideration the interwoven character of thought on the covenant in Germany, the Netherlands and Scotland, as well as within later pietism and Puritanism, van t'Spijker then asked which specific elements of Bullinger's covenant theology could be traced back, and how far back. Bullinger's special role in the definition of the so-called *tertium genus* of Reformation history is closely implicated in his theology of the covenant. Professor van t'Spijker concluded his lecture by highlighting aspects of Bullinger's covenant theology which have had lasting consequence for contemporary questions concerning the church and theology.

6. **W. P. Stephens**, sometime Professor of Church History and Dean of the Faculty of Divinity at the University of Aberdeen, compared Bullinger with Zwingli on the question of **Predestination**. While many stress the continuity between Zwingli and Bullinger, Professor Stephens argued that careful study reveals significant differences both in their respective presentations of predestination and its role in their own theologies, not least in relation to baptism. Both relate predestination to providence, both emphasize election rather than reprobation, both have a strong sense of the problems raised by the doctrine, and hence both show some reserve in expounding it. Zwingli's fundamental use of predestination is to affirm God's sovereignty in salvation. Bullinger stresses the inscrutability of God's counsels. And whereas Zwingli develops predestination in the context of controversy, Bullinger is inclined to see the doctrine as itself a source of controversy. Bullinger would appear to hold <double> predestination, yet rarely expresses this position and always qualifies it, and therefore rejects <curious questions> while pointing to what God has revealed both of Himself and his will. Bullinger's presentation is always Christological in emphasis: election is <in Christ>. Responsibility for lack of faith is not in God's will but in the human will. God's desire is for all to be saved. Bullinger consistently opposes any suggestion that God is the author of sin or evil and equally opposes any suggestion that we can be the author of our salvation which is wholly dependent on divine agency. Unlike Zwingli, Bullinger relates election positively to baptism, but does not give it a significant role in his defence of infant baptism.

7. **Christoph Strohm** holds the Lehrstuhl für Kirchengeschichte in the Evangelisch-Theologische Fakultät, Ruhr-Universität Bochum, in Germany. His keynote address was titled «Pauline-Johannine Soteriology: frontlines, developments, and the distinctiveness of Bullinger's doctrine of **Justifi-**

cation.» Strohm began by emphasizing that Bullinger's doctrine of justification, by revealing the starting point, development, and distinctiveness of his theology as a whole, provides something of a hermeneutical key to his thought. The young Bullinger was as a student of Luther, who adhered to what Strohm defined as the «mystically-coloured desire,» and did so more faithfully than Melancthon, who – for the sake of a more methodically-ordered presentation – chooses to differentiate very precisely between justification and sanctification, and understands the former strictly forensically. The idea of justification *sola fide* for Bullinger, as for Luther, marks the profile of Protestant Christianity decisively over against Rome and the radicals. Unlike Luther, neither the differentiation between law and gospel nor the forensic and effective *iustificatio* play a leading role for Bullinger. While Melancthon views the doctrine forensically in the interest of a clear distinction between justification and sanctification, Bullinger retains Luther's mystically-marked idea of a «partaking» of the faithful in Christ's righteousness. Bullinger's principal emphasis is on establishing people as subjects of good actions *through* justification: *vivificatio*. With this, the differentiation of Bullinger's position should be noted in all clarity over against the Roman Catholic conception of justifying grace as a «*habitus*» which must increase.

8. **Bruce Gordon**, Reader in Modern History at the University of St Andrews, Scotland, presented a major paper on **eschatology** and spirituality: «The Four Last Things: Death, Judgement and the Afterlife in Bullinger's Spirituality.» With his famous sermons on the books of Daniel and Revelation Bullinger established himself as one of the most important Reformation writers on the Apocalypse. Gordon began with an exploration of Bullinger's treatment of death as both a punishment for sin and a desirable liberation from the world. His discourse on the Last Judgement served several concurrent purposes: it was a rhetorical means of warning the faithful about God's wrath; it was integral to Bullinger's political negotiations with the magistrates; and it revealed Bullinger's mature stance as a prophetic voice declaring unseen things. Following Zwingli and most other reformers, Bullinger comprehensively rejected purgatory as a place of temporal punishment. He insisted rather on immediate judgement following death. On hell, in contrast, he had relatively little to say. Bullinger's treatment of the topography of the afterlife also reveals his continued attachment to the medieval Aristotelian view of the cosmos and how this was to be incorporated into his biblical message. Bullinger's discussion of death and the afterlife was very much directed towards the spirituality of the living. It provided the framework for his pastoral message that Christian spirituality consists of the traditional stages of purification, illumination and perfection – key terms in his vocabulary. Increasingly Bullinger saw the purpose of life to be a good death

and understood himself as having the prophetic responsibility of explaining the final things to the people. For Gordon, attention to both Bullinger's understanding and his vocabulary of death and the afterlife provides a point of entry to explore more fully the character of his distinctively Reformed spirituality.

9. **Herman Selderhuis**, Professor of Church History and Church Polity at the Theologische Universiteit, Apeldoorn, the Netherlands, addressed Bullinger's doctrine of the church: «Kirche unter dem Kreuz: die Ekklesiologie Heinrich Bullingers» [Church under the Cross: H. Bullinger's Ecclesiology]. Selderhuis noted that research on Bullinger's **ecclesiology** has been limited, and for the most part restricted to the framework of the interaction between the Church and the civil authority. As a result a static interpretation has inevitably emerged. An altogether different picture of his ecclesiology comes into view on closer examination of his sermons on the Apocalypse. For Bullinger, the Apocalypse is above all about the church. Indeed for Bullinger the central claim of this final book of the New Testament is that Christ never will leave the church here on earth. The Christian community needs this certainty precisely because it is an earthly community. The suffering of the church as a terrestrial community is fundamental to its existence until the final return of Christ as Judge. Until then the Church is threatened by princes who will seek to hold sway over the church or threaten her with the sword. Another threat comes from the Papacy and a third from heresy. On the theological plane, Bullinger's ecclesiology is determined ultimately by the principle of «*communio cum Christo*». To be in communion with Christ is to share in his cross and sorrows. This communion guarantees that Christ will continually attend and care for the church as his bride. Communion with Christ also has consequences for the relationship among the membership, for the future of the church, and for the relation between faith and election. Selderhuis concluded by noting the significant absence of the covenant motif in Bullinger's *Sermons on the Apocalypse*. The principles of Bullinger's ecclesiology ought to be of high relevance to today's Church.

10. Dr. **Peter Opitz** of the Institut für Schweizerische Reformationsgeschichte, University of Zurich, is editor of the new critical edition of Bullinger's theological writings (*Dekaden*). He contributed a major paper on the key theme of Bullinger's so-called «**prophetic office**» under the title «Das «*munus propheticum*» bei Bullinger.» According to Opitz, the reformer is particularly remembered for having «consolidated» and «institutionalised» the Reformation in Zurich, a process closely connected to his exercise of the prophetic office. In the *Karlstagsrede* of 1532, a speech delivered at the annual festival on 28 January commemorating Charlemagne's original endowment of the Grossmunster, Bullinger compared his function to the prophetic office

as originally formulated by his predecessor Zwingli, namely as a «servant of the divine word» after the example of the Old Testament prophets. As such it was his duty to announce first and foremost the great reconciliation. For Bullinger prophecy was at the same time a pedagogical task. In preparation for this all candidates for ministry in Zurich were required to take a theological examination which included the rigorous testing of linguistic and other higher academic attainments. In addition, through exercise of the prophetic office the reformed clergy became associates with the political authorities in governance of the populace. Bullinger's great achievement was both to preserve and to transform Zwingli's inheritance through the crises and upheaval from the 1530s through the early 1570s.

11. **Dr. Andreas Mühling**, Lecturer in Church History at the University of Luzern, presented an analysis of pastoral care in his paper «Bullinger als Seelsorger im Spiegel seiner Korrespondenz» [Bullinger as Pastor in the light of his Correspondence]. Bullinger belonged to the company of the first-generation reformers in grounding his theological account of **pastoral care** on late-medieval common-places. Through correct theological teaching as well as the appropriate practice of piety, the people were enabled to find their relationship to the divine covenant. For Bullinger the pastoral duties of «teaching, admonishing, encouraging and comforting» are to be read chiefly in the context of pastoral care. In his ecclesiastical and political discourse Bullinger was frequently moved by pastoral considerations towards his interlocutors. His vast and diverse correspondence reveals a comprehensive understanding of pastoral care ranging from marriage problems to confrontation with illness and death, family disputes, professional problems, as well as involved political situations. Throughout Christo-centrism constitutes the basic structure of Bullinger's conception of pastoral care, especially on matters concerning life, suffering, and death. Indeed Bullinger's strength and credibility in pastoral conversation rely upon a refusal to conceal the very real worries, pains, mortal fears, and even theological attacks suffered by Christians. Moreover, for Bullinger the responsibility of pastoral care is required of all Christians. The Bible itself is the key instrument of advice within the settled religious context of obedience and prayer on the one hand, and the right administration of the sacraments on the other. Mühling concluded by emphasizing the simultaneously theological and ethical character of Bullinger's doctrine and practice of pastoral care.

12. **Dr. Amy Burnett**, Associate Professor of History, University of Nebraska (Lincoln), spoke on the subject «Heinrich Bullinger and the Problem of Eucharistic Concord.» She began by observing that the correspondence of Reformed church leaders in the years immediately following the Peace of Augsburg reveals their common desire for eucharistic concord with the

churches of Germany. Yet it was the irenic Bullinger who alone opposed the calling of a new religious colloquy among Protestants to address the doctrine of the **Eucharist**. He was opposed to any concord with those who regarded his predecessor Zwingli as a heretic. Moreover, he refused to accept any statement on the sacrament that did not reflect «the simplicity of the truth» concerning the Lord's Supper. To fundamental concerns dating from the early 1530s Bullinger added new objections that grew out of the events of the two decades between the Wittenberg Concord (1536) and the Peace of Augsburg (1555). First and foremost was his fear that re-opening the debate would cause disunity among the Swiss churches, a fear based on his observation of Bucer's influence in Switzerland during the later 1530s and 1540s. The renewal of eucharistic controversy in the early 1550s only strengthened his conviction that the Gnesio-Lutherans would allow no compromise with the Reformed on the issue of the Lord's Supper. Finally, Bullinger recognized that there could be no satisfactory resolution to the dilemma posed by his rejection of the Augsburg Confession owing to the political significance given to that Confession by the Peace of Augsburg.

13. Dr. **Carrie Euler**, Department of History, Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, addressed Bullinger's **practical divinity** in her paper «Practical Piety: Bullinger's Marriage Theology as a Skillful Blending of Theory and Praxis.» Euler argued that Bullinger's theology of marriage, particularly his presentation of it in *Der Christlich Eestand* (1540), is indicative of a strong commitment to the practical application of evangelical principles among the laity. She suggested, more generally, that much of Bullinger's success as a church leader and «architect of Reformation» both at home and abroad was owing to this skilful blending of theology with practical advice. While Bullinger's book on marriage provides perhaps the best example of his pragmatism, it is also visible in other of his writings and in his actions as leader of the Zurich church. Bullinger builds on the premise of a direct and intimate relationship between morality and doctrine. His intention was to demonstrate «that wedloke maye well proceade and be kepte, & that nothinge be done amysse thorow ignorance or evel custome, or for fault of doctryne.» Moreover, his extensive advice on the relationship between husbands and wives, their domestic duties, and the rearing of children reveals a sincere desire to integrate religious and moral reform into the daily lives of the people. Dr. Euler also adduced evidence of this phenomenon outside of Bullinger's marriage theology. She discussed his use of the covenant metaphor to justify and explain the application of Old Testament law to Christian society, his composition of educational and devotional writings (such as *Bericht der Kranken* and *Summa Christenlicher Religion*), and his working relationship with the Zurich city council.

14. **Michael Baumann**, Institut für Schweizerische Reformationsgeschichte, University of Zurich, turned the spotlight onto Bullinger's political theology in his paper «Heinrich Bullinger, Peter Martyr Vermigli und das Verständnis der Obrigkeit: ein Vergleich ihrer Auffassung von Obrigkeit» [H. Bullinger, P. M. Vermigli and the understanding of Authority: a comparison of their conceptions of Authority]. In his activity as senior Minister and Antistes of Zurich, Bullinger presents a variegated picture of the responsibilities of **civil authority**. In his understanding the power of this authority is divinely derived: «all power comes from God.» Thus the civic authorities are to be regarded as «*Hausväter*,» princes, even «gods» (*elohim*) and governors in the administration of justice. Obedience is owed to such authority owing to its divine origin, however it could lead simultaneously back into bondage. Movements for emancipation became noticeable within the municipal regiment prior to Bullinger's taking office. There is evidence in autumn 1531, for example, of the emergence of at least a theoretical acceptance of the possibility of resistance against the authorities. For Bullinger it was clear that «state» and «church» concerns represent distinct points of view yet both arise out of congruent areas, that is to say civic and ecclesiastical concerns behave «concentrically». In short, the Ministry and the Magistracy pursue certain common ends and goals. Baumann then sought to show that what Bullinger developed on a practical and theoretical level finds its corresponding counterpart in Peter Martyr Vermigli's Old Testament exegesis. In his commentaries on the books of Samuel and Kings, Vermigli develops a theoretical Republicanism *avant la lettre*, detached from the immediate political concerns of Zurich, and yet simultaneously quite intensely connected with an emergent republican ideal. In his idealized analysis of the ancient kingdom of Israel Vermigli links the aspect of the divine claim to order all aspects of life with the proclamation of the faith itself. It is not only in the quotidian life of the Church but on the conceptual level as well that Bullinger and Vermigli prove to be in substantive mutual agreement.

15. **Torrance Kirby**, associate professor of Church History at McGill University in Montreal, addressed a specific application of Bullinger's theology of the **Magistracy** in a monarchical setting in his treatment of «The Civil Magistrate and the *cura religionis*: Heinrich Bullinger's prophetic office and the English Reformation.» Kirby employed one of Bullinger's preferred categories and suggested that Bullinger's distinctive role with respect to the reformation of the Church of England is perhaps best described as «prophetic» (see Opitz above). By means of the translation of his works into English, through epistles dedicatory, and through an extensive correspondence, Bullinger extended the exercise of his prophetic office to include the realm of England. Given the scope of this influence and its remarkable consistency

over more than forty years, Bullinger assumed his place among the first rank of reformers of the English Church. Indeed it is arguable that no other divine exercised a comparable degree of continuous influence over all of the principal stages of the English Reformation – from the Henrician and Edwardine reforms, through the crucible of the Marian exile, to the eventual implementation and consolidation of the Elizabethan religious settlement. At every stage Bullinger was engaged as a significant player, and in later years was frequently appealed to as an arbiter of internal disputes and even as a public apologist of the Church of England on the international stage. Bullinger lays a fair claim to being a theologian *par excellence* of the reformed Church of England. Throughout the forty-odd years of his support of the cause of religious reform in England, one recurrent theme of his discourse stands out among the rest, and that concerns the very pre-eminence of the civil magistrate's authority in what Bullinger refers to as «*cura religionis*». In short, the proposal put forward is that Heinrich Bullinger's distinctive contribution to the English Reformation was to be a prophet of the Royal Supremacy.

16. **John Craig** is associate professor in the Department of History at Simon Fraser University in Vancouver. Craig began the presentation of his research on «Heinrich Bullinger and the early modern English parish» by affirming the importance of Bullinger's **international influence** in general and upon the English reformed church in particular. The latter fact is captured most clearly in the extensive correspondence he maintained with numerous Elizabethan bishops (many of them guests of Bullinger while in exile under Queen Mary) but also in the way in which his writings were translated into English. Craig examined the popular responses to two of Bullinger's works in English translation: the «Decades» or *Fiftie Godlie and Learned Sermons* (1577) and *Sermons on the Apocalypse* (1561). He then proceeded to compare the responses to these texts among the clergy and people, for both works had received a certain amount of episcopal approval. The Elizabethan bishops sought in the 1570s and '80s to use the Decades as a key text for clerical instruction. What were the reasons for these initiatives by the bishops and for the responses to them? By appealing to data about books purchased and owned by parish communities in the counties of Cambridgeshire, Suffolk, Hertfordshire and Devon with a sampling from London parishes, Craig argued that the attempt to establish Bullinger's Decades as an influential text of the Elizabethan church failed. Few parishes ever purchased this work and other texts such as English translations of Calvin's *Institutes*, Peter Martyr's *Commonplaces*, or the *Commonplaces* of Wolfgang Musculus appear to have been more common.

17. Dr. **Christine Stuber** of Bern continued the theme of **Nachleben** in her treatment of «The Influence of the *Second Helvetic Confession* in Switzerland from the sixteenth through the nineteenth centuries» [Zur Wirkungsgeschichte der *Confessio Helvetica Posterior* in der Schweiz (16.–19. Jh.)]. For Stuber the Second Helvetic Confession stands as the theological connecting link, as it were, among the Reformed churches of the Swiss Confederacy. This Confession became the authoritative mandate defining the catechism and served as an instrument of discipline to defrock or punish refractory ministers. Through the catechism the Confession influenced religious and ethical life. The teaching of the *Second Helvetic Confession* was very strongly scriptural. In 1675 the *Helvetic Consensus Formula* would provide an explanatory elaboration of the *Confession*. This new formula, however, was unable to maintain its authority for long on account of the degree to which *Second Helvetic* had already become established and well-rooted in the church. Stuber raised the question whether the *Second Helvetic Confession* may have contributed to the widespread practice of Swiss ministers wishing all biblical statements might stand alone without appeals to dogmatic precision. The second article of the *Confession* maintains the necessity on the part of subscribers to dissent from any interpretations of Scripture «when they are found to set down things differing from, or altogether contrary to, the Scriptures.» Since 1706 many Vaudois candidates for ordination have affirmed the *Consensus Formula* with the added words «quatenus cum verbo Dei consentit» or «so far as the teaching of the *Consensus* agrees with the holy writ,» and this contrary to the direction of the Bernese authorities.

The *Second Helvetic Confession* became the international standard of belief for many of the Reformed churches and also became a key frame of reference for new doctrinal departures. In 1819 Genevan adherents of the pietist Awakening printed the Confession as an expression of their faith and as a joint confession with the churches of Switzerland. In addition, the Bernese revivalist minister, Antoine Galland, sought to establish the movement's respectability by an appeal to the authority of the *Second Helvetic Confession*.

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