

## *Portrait of Bullinger's Theology*

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Hans Asper's portrait of Heinrich Bullinger (dated 1559) which is kept in the Zentralbibliothek Zürich, shows some striking similarities with Elias Haussmann's famous portrait (1746) of the composer J. S. Bach. Haussmann's portrait shows Bach aged 51 years holding the score of a canon he had composed. The ingenuity of the manuscript of the canon in Bach's right hand is that it can be read musically right way up as well as upside down, thus pointing to the creative genius of Bach. It is as if Bach is challenging the viewer to "decode" the music manuscript. Asper's portrait is of Bullinger aged 55 holding an open book revealing certain Scripture passages. It is almost certain that Bullinger intended these verses to stimulate those who look closely at the portrait to think about how he understood redemptive history and the message of the Bible as a whole. Through the portrait Bullinger seeks to challenge the viewer to grasp the significance of the biblical texts chosen and the order in which they are presented.

In order, the verses shown are: Matthew 17:5, Colossians 1:19–20, Colossians 2:3, Colossians 2:10, Colossians 2:9, and John 1:16–17.<sup>1</sup> The texts used were from the Zurich Bible of 1539. Could it be that Bullinger intends us to see two *inclusios* here? That is, Matthew 17:5 and John 1:16–17 indicate an overall *inclusio* while Colossians 1:19–20 and Colossians 2:9 indicate an inner *inclusio*. On this analysis the outer *inclusio* undergirds the role in salvation history of Christ, the eternal Son of God, the

<sup>1</sup> Rainer *Henrich*, *Auf den Spuren der Reformation Zwinglis*, Zürich 1994, 36.

second person of the Trinity. This suggested analysis also explains why Colossians 2:10 is listed before Colossians 2:9 as the inner *inclusio* framed by emphasis on the fullness in Christ focuses on the believer being complete or perfect because of possessing all in Christ.

Asper's portrait has this inscription at the top:

HEINRYCHUS BULLINGERUS  
 UNDECIMI IAM NUNC LABUNTUR SYDERA LUSTRI  
 HAEC AETAS, FORMAM PICTA TABELLA REFERT  
 NIL EGO VEL FORMAM VEL VITAE TEMPORA SPECTRO  
 SED CHRISTUM, VITAE QUI MIHI FORMA MEAE EST<sup>2</sup>

In many ways this inscription is a personal testimony of Bullinger indicating to what extent Christ has been formed in him in the context of what it means to live a life that is complete in Christ. Being fifty five years old Bullinger was well above the average life expectancy in Europe in the 16<sup>th</sup> Century.<sup>3</sup> The year of the portrait was also when Bullinger wrote his catechism, *Catechesis pro adultioribus scripta* and his *Sendschrift* to Hungary which, in embryo, contained the essence of *The Second Helvetic Confession*. This article examines one by one the Scriptural passages Bullinger chose for his portrait to reveal how they represent a distilled summary of Bullinger's theology. The passages chosen by Bullinger indicate that he was more concerned for *historia salutis* rather than *ordo salutis*.

1. Matthew 17:5: Hic est filius meus dilectus, in quo placata est anima mea. Ipsum audite.

It is not surprising that Matthew 17:5 is the first passage in Bullinger's catena of biblical passages. Bullinger's version of this verse with *placata* instead of *placitus* for *eudokēsa* occurs on the title page of all of his works.<sup>4</sup> Significantly it is repeated on the last

<sup>2</sup> Paul Boesch, *Der Zürcher Apelles: Neues zu den Reformationsbildnissen von Hans Asper*, in: *Zwingliana* 9 (1949), 16–43, here 35.

<sup>3</sup> Calvin only lived to 55.

<sup>4</sup> In his commentary on Matthew Bullinger translates it as *HIC EST FILIUS MEUS*

page of his magnum opus, *The Decades*. Indeed, the verse is given prominence in sermon IV.1 of *The Decades* where Bullinger discusses the gospel in a section where he also refers to 2 Peter 1:17.<sup>5</sup>

This verse encapsulates for Bullinger both orthodoxy and orthopraxis. There is, on the one hand, focus on Jesus, the eternal Son of God the Father, as the goal of redemptive history, and emphasis, on the other hand, on disciples of Jesus living righteous or *integer* before God. That Bullinger understood this injunction to be directed to the elect people of God, spiritual Israel or faithful believers can be seen in Bullinger's citation of Jeremiah 7:23 in *De testamento*, his treatise on the covenant (1534): "Obey my voice and I will be your God and you will be my people and walk in all the ways which I have commanded you so that it might be well with you."<sup>6</sup> Moreover, this quotation from Jeremiah 7:23 is juxtaposed with the explanation that the summary of the covenant is obedience or faith.<sup>7</sup>

The context of Matthew 17:5 in Matthew's Gospel is the transfiguration of Christ together with Moses and Elijah. This underscored for Bullinger that Christ not only fulfilled the Law and the Prophets but that he was also the climax of biblical revelation. As Bullinger constantly emphasized the message of the biblical canon as a whole, this verse, for him, pointed to Christ as the goal of the canon. Since Bullinger viewed redemptive history as being unfolded with the progressive revealing of God's covenant with his elect people it is also the case that this verse points to Christ as the goal or focus of the covenant.<sup>8</sup> In this connection, Peter Opitz has identified in Bullinger's use of this verse a reference to both the priestly and rabbinic roles of Christ who, as Redeemer, fulfills the cove-

*DILECTUS, IN QUO PLACATUS SUM, IPSUM AUDITE* – Heinrich Bullinger, In sacrosanctum Iesu Christi domini nostri Evangelium secundum Matthaicum commentariorum libri XII, Zürich 1542, 166v.

<sup>5</sup> Heinrich Bullinger Werke, Theologische Schriften [HBTS], Bd. 3: Sermonem Decades quinque de potissimis Christianae religionis capitibus (1552), ed. Peter Opitz, Zürich 2008, 506.

<sup>6</sup> "Audite vocem meam & ero vobis Deus, & vos eritis mihi populos, & ambulate in omni via quam mandavi vobis ut bene sit vobis." Heinrich Bullinger, *De testamento seu foedere Dei unico et aeterno*, Zurich 1534, 33r.

<sup>7</sup> *Ipsa inquam foederis summa, obedientia sive ipsa fides* – *De testamento*, 33v.

<sup>8</sup> Joe Mock, *Biblical and Theological Themes in Heinrich Bullinger's "De Testamento"* (1534), in: *Zwingliana* 40 (2013), 1–35, here 3.

nant.<sup>9</sup> In fact, Bullinger had made this point as early as 1525 in *Von dem Touff*: “dass ouch Christus sye unser volcökonne, welchs nütz abders ist, dann dass in Christo, der vater versönt und das testament erfüllt worden ist [Kol 1, 19f].”<sup>10</sup>

For Bullinger, the goal of redemptive history is about reconciliation: the reconciliation of mankind to God and the reconciliation of God to mankind. With respect to Matthew 17:5 Christine Christ-von Wedel observed that “Erasmus’s translation allows for the interpretation that God is reconciled with humans (Luke 2:14) through his beloved Son (Matthew 17:5), an interpretation which was already favoured by the Zurich Reformers”.<sup>11</sup> This is reflected in Bullinger’s use of *placata* rather than *placita*. It is not without significance that in sermon IV.1 of *The Decades* in which Bullinger unpacks his understanding of the gospel he uses *placatus* rather than *placitus* as many as six times.<sup>12</sup> Bullinger stated that: “The heavenly Father truly set forth his Son, our Lord Jesus Christ for our propitiation, certainly to be our reconciliation, on account of God being reconciled (*placatus*) we might be adopted into the (number of the) sons of God.”<sup>13</sup> He further pointed out that: “However many believe in Christ, assuredly because of him, the Father is reconciled (*placatus*) to us and because of him we are considered to be just (*iusti*) and holy (*sancti*).”<sup>14</sup>

The significance of *in quo* is determinative for Bullinger’s understanding of reconciliation. Reconciliation with God is only possible for believers if they are in Christ. Bullinger’s point is that the believer is “in Christ” or in union with Christ and, therefore, receives *omnia bona* in him. Indeed, union with Christ undergirded Bullinger’s understanding of the gospel and, therefore, not surprisingly, this theme is reflected in many of his works. For example, he deliberately referred to union with Christ in several sections of

<sup>9</sup> Peter *Opitz*, *Heinrich Bullinger als Theologe: Eine Studie zu den “Dekaden”*, Zürich 2004, 333.

<sup>10</sup> HBTS 2: *Unveröffentlichte Werke der Kappeler Zeit*. Theologica, ed. Hans-Georg vom Berg et al., Zürich 1991, 74.

<sup>11</sup> Christine *Christ-von Wedel*, *Erasmus of Rotterdam: Advocate of a New Christianity*, Toronto 2013, 88.

<sup>12</sup> HBTS 3.1, 492, 493, 497, 505, 506 (x2).

<sup>13</sup> HBTS 3.1, 514.

<sup>14</sup> HBTS 3.1, 515.

the *Consensus Tigurinus* (1549).<sup>15</sup> Moreover, chapters XV (justification) and XX (baptism) of *The Second Helvetic Confession* refer respectively to participating in Christ by believing and being joined to God himself by a holy covenant. Union with Christ is also clearly stated in the title given to the sermon in which he unpacks his understanding of the gospel, viz. sermon IV.1 of *The Decades (in hoc verae salutis omnia)*.<sup>16</sup> Thus Opitz observes that Bullinger's understanding of Matthew 17:5 "characterizes also his exegesis of Romans. But listening to Christ means having faith in Christ which is possible only in pneumatical union with Christ, that is, participation in Christ's spirit of love".<sup>17</sup>

Matthew 17:5 also contains, for Bullinger, a strong parenetic emphasis in *ipsum audite*. Bullinger understood *audite* in terms of obedience as is evident from his translation into German: "imm sind gehörig." In doing so, Bullinger was effectively explaining that the torah of the old covenant was replaced by the torah, teaching or instruction of the Messiah in the new covenant that would be written on the hearts of men and women in fulfillment of Jeremiah 31. Thus, Bullinger indicated both the discontinuity and continuity between the old covenant and the new covenant. Just as God's chosen people in the old covenant were called to live covenant faithful lives by living according to torah so the elect people of God in the new covenant are called to live according to the word of Christ. It is clear from Bullinger's commentary on Matthew that he saw in Matthew 17:5 a direct reference to the prophet to come who is mentioned in Deuteronomy 18:15.<sup>18</sup> This is clearly referred to in Chapter XIII (the gospel of Jesus Christ) of *The Second Hel-*

<sup>15</sup> Articles 5, 6, 9, 10, 14 and 19. *Vide Consensus Tigurinus: Heinrich Bullinger und Johannes Calvin über das Abendmahl*, ed. Emidio Campi and Ruedi Reich, Zürich 2009, 258–267.

<sup>16</sup> HBTS 3.1, 491.

<sup>17</sup> Peter Opitz, Bullinger on Romans, in: *Reformation Readings of Romans*, ed. Kathy Ehrensperger and R. Ward Holder, Edinburgh 2008 (Romans through history and culture series 8), 148–165, here 155.

<sup>18</sup> Heinrich Bullinger, *In sacrosanctum Iesu Christi domini nostri Evangelium secundum Matthaeum commentariorum libri XII*, Zurich 1542, 166v. Bullinger refers to both Peter's sermon of Acts 3 and Stephen's sermon of Acts 7 which refers to the prophet to come referred to in Deuteronomy 18:15. Cf. Bullinger's comment on 2 Peter 1:17f. Heinrich Bullinger, *In d. Petri apostoli epistolam utranque commentarius*, Zürich 1534, 94r, 94v.

*vetic Confession*. In terms of redemption history, Bullinger saw the transfiguration of Christ in Matthew 17 as the dawning of the “age to come”. This is reflected in Joseph Ratzinger’s observation that “The Torah of the Messiah is the Messiah, Jesus himself. It is to him that the command ‘Listen to him’ refers”.<sup>19</sup>

Elsewhere in his works Bullinger referred to *solus Christus audiendus*. With respect to this phrase, Daniël Timmerman has pointed out that the “motto from Cyprian was first transmitted to Bullinger through the writings of Erasmus”.<sup>20</sup> Bullinger first referred to *solus Christus audiendus* as early as 1523 in his *De scripturae negotio*.<sup>21</sup> Bullinger subsequently reiterated *solus Christus audiendus* in *Antwort an Burchard* (1526).<sup>22</sup> Staedtke has described *solus Christus audiendus* as Bullinger’s “dominant theme of putting into practice theological knowledge”.<sup>23</sup>

Staedtke’s observation of Bullinger’s understanding of *ipsum audite* in terms of *solus Christus audiendus* explains why Matthew 17:5 is so foundational to Bullinger’s theology. For Bullinger, in this verse is encapsulated soteriology in the context of redemptive history juxtaposed with an exhortation for living *integer*. Because the covenant was the means for enacting God’s plan for the salvation of his people as well the context for living *integer* Bullinger concluded his treatise on the covenant, *De testamento* (1534), with his own translation of Psalm 25:10:

“Omnes viae domini sunt gratia & fides  
His qui servant testamentum & foedus eius.”

<sup>19</sup> Joseph Ratzinger, *Many Religions – One Covenant: Israel, the Church and the World*, San Francisco 1999, 70.

<sup>20</sup> Daniël Timmerman, *Heinrich Bullinger on Prophecy and the Prophetic Office (1523–1538)*, Göttingen 2015 (*Reformed Historical Theology* 33), 136 fn. 28.

<sup>21</sup> HBTS 2, 22–24.

<sup>22</sup> HBTS 2, 143, 146f.

<sup>23</sup> “Das bestimmende Thema des theologischen Erkenntnisvollzuges.” Joachim Staedtke, *Die Theologie des jungen Bullinger*, Zürich 1962, 52–57.

2. Colossians 1:19–20: Quoniam complacuit patri universam in quo inhabitare plenitudinem, et per eum reconciliare cuncta sibi, pacificatis per sanguine crucis eius per eundem, sive quae in terra sunt, quae in coelis.<sup>24</sup>

Several observations can be made of the text used. Firstly, the addition of *patri* was due to an ellipsis in the Greek text. The addition of *patri* rather than *Deo* points to a parallel with Matthew 17:5 with a focus on the Father-Son relationship between God *cornucopia* “the horn of plenty” and Christ. Secondly, the translation of *pan* with *universam* rather than the Vulgate’s *omnem* is to be noted. Although *omnis* does mean “all”, *universus* refers to “entire” or “whole” and, therefore, the choice of this adjective underscores that there is not the slightest hint of subordination between the Son and the Father. Thirdly, *ta panta* is translated with *cuncta* rather than *omnia* which is used by the Vulgate.<sup>25</sup> In *The Decades* Bullinger often used *cunctus* rather than *omnis* to differentiate in a subtle manner between “all” according to God’s plan and “all” without exception.<sup>26</sup> In many ways these verses allude to a theme that underlies Bullinger’s works *viz.* that the biblical canon is the revelation of God’s redemptive plan from the Garden of Eden to the new Garden of the Book of Revelation.

Unmistakably, Bullinger chose these key verses from Colossians to underscore the full divinity of Christ and, thereby, to present him on a par with God *cornucopia*. In *De testamento* Bullinger referred to God specifically as *El Shaddai* who, in confirming and establishing the covenant with Abraham and his descendants, introduced himself as “I am the abundantly all-sufficient God, the

<sup>24</sup> In Bullinger’s commentary on Colossians he has “Quoniam in illo complacitum est patri universam plenitudinem inhabitare et per eum reconciliare cuncta erga se, pacificatis per sanguine crucis eius per eundem, sive quae in terra sunt sive in coelis”. HBTS 7: Kommentare zu den Neutestamentlichen Briefen. Gal – Eph – Phil – Kol, ed. Luca Baschera, Zürich 2014, 259.

<sup>25</sup> Luther’s Bible has “alles”.

<sup>26</sup> Joe Mock, Was Bullinger’s Gospel Synergistic or Universalistic? in: Scottish Bulletin of Evangelical Theology 34 (2016), 141–157, here 153f.

horn of plenty”.<sup>27</sup> The significance of these two verses from Colossians for Bullinger, therefore, is that they serve to highlight that those who are in Christ receive all the covenant blessings God promises to his elect. The fact that this passage underscores the “blood of the cross” indicates, for Bullinger, that the blessings of the covenant are given by God *cornucopia* through the means of the blood of the covenant as the seal of God’s one and everlasting covenant. Moreover, this passage highlights reconciliation which is at the centre of Matthew 17:5.

Colossians 1:19 is cited by Bullinger at the end of sermon I.8 of *The Decades* in a section dealing with the Apostle’s Creed and specifically in his discussion of the Holy Spirit. His version of this verse here is somewhat nuanced: “‘It pleased the Father,’ said the apostle, ‘that the whole fullness should dwell in the Son’ (Colossians 1:19) and in him to recapitulate (*recapitulare*) and, as it were, bring all aspects of salvation into a sum that in him the faithful might be made perfect”.<sup>28</sup> There is thus a deliberate link made with Ephesians 1:10 and with Colossians 2:10 where Bullinger translated the Greek text by *et estis in illo completi*.<sup>29</sup> Significantly, in *De testamento* Bullinger referred to the one and eternal covenant of God in terms of “recapitulation”.<sup>30</sup> Evidently, Bullinger was following Irenaeus in employing the classical rhetoric *recapitulans* to refer to the life and ministry of Christ in that Christ not only “repeats” the history of mankind but that he is also the summary statement of the Father.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>27</sup> “Ego sum Deus omnisufficientia plenitudine et copiae cornu.” Bullinger, *De testamento*, 12r.

<sup>28</sup> “‘Placuit patri,’ ait apostolos, ‘universam plenitudinem inhabitare in filio’ [Kol 1,19] et in ipso recapitulare ac velut in summam redigere salutis omnia; ac in ipso fideles sint completi.” HBTS 3.1, 99.

<sup>29</sup> HBTS 7, 271.

<sup>30</sup> “Anacephaleosim”. Bullinger, *De testamento*, 14r.

<sup>31</sup> Joe Mock, Bullinger’s *The Old Faith* (1537) as a Theological Tract, in: *Unio cum Christo* 3 (2017), 137–154, here 144f.



3. Colossians 2:3 In quo enim sunt reconditi omnes  
thesauri sapientiae ac scientiae

How Bullinger understood the theological significance of this verse must be seen in the context of how he viewed the words of the preceding verse. The text of this verse that Bullinger used in his commentary on Colossians is also the same as that in the Zurich Bible of 1539 *viz. in agitionem mysterii dei et patris et Christi*.<sup>32</sup> There is a clear difference with the text in the Vulgate, *in agitionem mysterii Dei Patris Christi Iesu*, where “Christ” is in apposition with “the mystery of God the Father”. It appears that Bullinger exegeted Colossians 2:2 in terms of Paul’s desire that the Colossians might know the mystery of God, *viz.* of both the Father and Christ. Bullinger naturally understood “mystery” as that which was previously “hidden” but now “revealed”. In *De testamento* Bullinger had underscored that the greatest covenant gift was that of God El Shaddai (*cornucopia*) who gives himself to his chosen covenant people. In redemption history, this became a reality in the age of the new covenant with Christ in the heart of the believer through the Holy Spirit. Hence, Bullinger has chosen in Colossians 2:3 to use the verb *recondo* rather than *abscondo* which is used both by the Vulgate and by Calvin in his commentary. *Reconditi* refers to something that has been stored away whereas *absconditi* refers to something that is concealed. Bullinger sought, therefore, to see a nuanced difference between something that had been stored away (and, therefore, “hidden” or “out of sight”) to be revealed at the planned time and something that had been “hidden” and then, subsequently, “revealed”.

Colossians 2:3, 9, 10 are linked together towards the end of Bullinger’s discussion of true faith in sermon I.4 of *The Decades* where he refers to *ingentia haec beneficia dei gratis conferantur fidelibus*.<sup>33</sup> This sermon spotlights the meaning of the gospel and concludes with a declaration that the heart of the gospel is the fullness and sufficiency of Christ, that is to say, *solus Christus*.

<sup>32</sup> HBTS 7, 264.

<sup>33</sup> HBTS 3.1, 63.

## 4. Colossians 2:10 – Et estis in illo completi

The Vulgate has a slightly different text, *viz. et estis in illo repleti*. Bullinger may be seeing here a subtle difference between “perfect” (*completi*) and “full” (*repleti*). Thus this verse may well encapsulate for Bullinger one of the goals of the incarnation. Certainly the incarnation is underlined in Colossians 2:9 which is the next text in this catena of Bible texts. Significantly, Colossians 2 is referred to by Bullinger in his commentary on 2 Peter 1:3, 4 where the apostle Peter asserts *ut per haec efficeremini divinae consortes naturae*. For Bullinger, therefore, being *completus* in Christ as one of the benefits of the incarnation is more than being thoroughly equipped and enabled to live *integer* in covenant relationship with God. It is also, somehow, to share in God’s divine nature as the believer is in Christ.

In Bullinger’s explanation of the theological import of John 1:14–18 in his commentary of John he highlights the significance of the incarnation of Christ for believers with a direct reference to chapters 1 and 2 of Colossians. Citing Chrysostom, Bullinger stated of Christ that *ipse fons est et radix bonorum omnium*<sup>34</sup> and that believers receive the incarnate word *ceu omnium bonarum iugi fonte, gratiarum*.<sup>35</sup> In Christ, therefore, the believer receives all the promised covenant promises and blessings of God. This is succinctly declared in his commentary on John as *in quo perfecte consummantur credentes*.<sup>36</sup> Every word in this statement has been carefully chosen by Bullinger as it points to the purpose of the creation of mankind in terms of redemption history with believers<sup>37</sup> in Christ being made perfectly complete in Christ. Having stated that Christ is the font of living water Bullinger also pointed out in his commentary on John that *in quo proposuit donavitque nobis pater omnia ea quae ad perfectam beatitudinem sunt necessaria*.<sup>38</sup> In the same commentary he further pointed out that, in his son,

<sup>34</sup> Heinrich Bullinger, In divinum Iesu Christi Domini nostri Evangelium secundum Ioannem Commentariorum libri X, Zürich 1543, 14r.

<sup>35</sup> Bullinger, Evangelium secundum Ioannem, 14v.

<sup>36</sup> Bullinger, Evangelium secundum Ioannem, 13r.

<sup>37</sup> Bullinger often uses “credentes” to refer to the elect.

<sup>38</sup> Bullinger, Evangelium secundum Ioannem, 14r.

God gives believers *incomparabilis thesaurus* and *omnes caelestes thesaurus*.<sup>39</sup>

For the believer to be *in illo* or *in Christo* is only possible through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Scholars have rightly observed that Bullinger rarely makes direct reference to the role of the Holy Spirit but rather indirect inferences to the Spirit's work in the life of the elect. Bullinger often emphasized that it is through the Holy Spirit that the Torah of Christ is inscribed on the hearts of God's elect in the new covenant (Jeremiah 31, Ezekiel 36). As indicated above, Opitz explained that listening to Christ (*Ipsum audite*) "is possible only in pneumatical union with Christ".

#### 5. Colossians 2:9 – Quoniam in illo inhabit omnis plenitudo Dei corporaliter

In Bullinger's commentary for this verse he has *deitatis* instead of *Dei* which is the case for the Zurich Bible of 1539 and the Vulgate. This is merely Bullinger's effort to more accurately translate *theotētos*. In his commentary on this verse Bullinger underlines that this explains why only Christ is preached, for only through Christ is the believer made complete and justified. Furthermore, Bullinger pointed out that "bodily" (*corporaliter*) also has the sense of "by nature" (*naturaliter*). He explained this in terms of *er ists lybhafft*.<sup>40</sup>

Bullinger has a comprehensive discussion of the two natures of Christ as a result of the incarnation in sermon IV.6 of *The Decades*. This needs to be viewed in conjunction with what Bullinger wrote about the *descendit ad inferos* clause in the Creed and his conviction, like Zwingli, of the immortality of the soul. For Bullinger the incarnation of Christ was not only for the revelation of God and for the salvation of sinful mankind but was also fundamental for God's eternal purpose in the creation of mankind in his image.

<sup>39</sup> Bullinger, *Evangelium secundum Ioannem*, 15r.

<sup>40</sup> HBTS 7, 271f.

6. John 1:16,17 – Et de plenitudine eius nos omnes accepimus et gratiam pro gratia quia lex per Mosen data est gratia et veritas per Iesum Christum exorta est.

These were significant verses for Bullinger as they indicate both the continuity and discontinuity between the Old Testament and the New Testament. Significantly, Bullinger asserted that the old covenant and the new covenant had the same *religio vera* and the same *substantia*.<sup>41</sup> But they do differ in terms of their “accidents”.<sup>42</sup> Both testaments are characterized by God’s grace. Both testaments are characterized by *lex* not understood forensically but in terms of God’s word or God’s instruction for living *integer* before him in a covenant relationship. Bullinger was fond of referring to the difference between the new covenant and the old covenant in terms of *plenius*, *clarior*, *abundantissimus*, *excellentissimus*, *perfectissimus*, *splendidissimus* and *dilucidus*.

In explaining the significance of the giving of *gratia et veritas per Iesum Christum* in his commentary on John, Bullinger pointed out the full benefits of the believer in Christ in the new covenant because *in quo sint omnes thesauri caelestium donorum, adeoque fontem esse perennem gratiae, in quo sit quod omnibus sufficiat ad salutem*.<sup>43</sup> In the discussion of these verses in his commentary on John he underscored that the coming of Christ fulfilled what was written in the Law and the Prophets in terms of promise and fulfillment. Therefore, what Christ gives believers is referred to as superior (*praestitia*).<sup>44</sup>

## 7. Conclusion

This catena of biblical passages was carefully selected and arranged by Bullinger by the means of two *inclusios*. That these verses may not be so prominent in the works of Bullinger is not neces-

<sup>41</sup> Bullinger, De testamento, 25r.

<sup>42</sup> Bullinger, De testamento, 28v–29r.

<sup>43</sup> Bullinger, Evangelium secundum Ioannem, 13r.

<sup>44</sup> Bullinger, Evangelium secundum Ioannem, 14v.

sarily surprising. Each of the works that Bullinger penned was addressed to a particular audience or written in a specific context. There is, however, a deliberate linking of John 1 and Colossians 1 and 2 in the *Compendium christianae religionis* which is a Latin version of the *Summa christenlicher religion* both of which, as summaries of Christian doctrine, were published in 1556 or three years before Asper's portrait.<sup>45</sup> The section occurs in Chapter III of Book V of the *Compendium christianae religionis* which discusses that all are made perfect in Christ, that the law is fulfilled in him and that we are justified in him.<sup>46</sup> Significantly Bullinger tied together in this section John 1 and Colossians 1 and 2 with John 3:16 with the emphasis that God gives the elect into the hand of Jesus and that the elect believe in Jesus and receive eternal life. Moreover, John 1:17 is coupled together with Colossians 2 in Chapter XIII of *The Second Helvetic Confession* which is a succinct summary of the gospel. Indeed, this section of *The Second Helvetic Confession* states that what is rightly called the gospel is about those who have fullness through believing in Jesus and that evangelical doctrine is that in Jesus is to be found everything for salvation.<sup>47</sup>

It appears, therefore, that Bullinger chose these biblical passages to summarize his understanding of the gospel in the context of redemptive history. The passages chosen point to an unmistakable emphasis on fulfillment which is also reflected in the *The Second Helvetic Confession*:

“Therefore, the history delineated by the four Evangelists and explaining how these things were done or fulfilled by Christ, what Christ taught and did and that those who believe in him have all fullness, is rightly called the gospel.”<sup>48</sup>

<sup>45</sup> Heinrich Bullinger, *Compendium christianae religionis decem libris comprehensum*, Zürich 1556, 64v.

<sup>46</sup> Bullinger, *Compendium christianae religionis*, 64r: “In Christo Iesu esse omnem perfectionem, atque ipsum legi satisfecisse, & nostrum iustiam factum esse.”

<sup>47</sup> “Et quod in ipso credentes omnem habent plenitudinem, recte nuncupatur Evangelium [...] et in hoc vitae salutisque omnia, recte dicitur doctrina Evangelica.” Philip Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom with a History and Critical Notes*, Vol. III, New York 1877, 261.

<sup>48</sup> *Creeds and Confessions of Faith in the Christian Tradition*, Vol. II: Reformation Era, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan and Valerie Hotchkiss, New Haven 2003, 481.

As Christian Moser has pointed out, whenever Bullinger refers to history what is on view is primarily redemptive history and history of the covenant.<sup>49</sup> Bullinger constantly focused on *Versöhnungsgeschichte* and *Bundesgeschichte*. Hence, the history of the covenant is prominent in Bullinger's works because, in terms of promise and fulfillment, it explains how God accomplished his goal and purpose for redemptive history. This is succinctly expressed in Chapter XIII of *The Second Helvetic Confession* where Bullinger explained that the gospel is preached in that:

“God has now performed what he promised from the beginning of the world, and has sent, nay more, has given us his only Son and him reconciliation with the Father, the remission of sins, all fullness and everlasting life.”<sup>50</sup>

After careful examination, the key theological themes of reconciliation, forgiveness of sins, fullness in Christ and eternal life are either directly stated or implied in the biblical passages in the portrait of Bullinger. Thus, in redemptive historical terms, for Bullinger the gospel is about salvation fully accomplished in and through Christ.<sup>51</sup> The Scripture passages in Asper's portrait, therefore, indicate Bullinger's unswerving emphasis on Christ's role in redemptive history to save the elect *viz.* those who believe in him. This is the heart of the faith that Bullinger sought to teach others. This is reflected in the extensive study of *The Decades* by Opitz who concluded that one unmistakable theme of this work of Bullinger that was addressed to lay people is “Christus als Skopus der Trinitätslehre und Zentrum der regula fidei”.<sup>52</sup>

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*Abstract:* The Bible verses in Hans Asper's portrait of Heinrich Bullinger reveal a summary of his understanding of redemptive history and the message of the Bible as a

<sup>49</sup> Christian Moser, *Die Dignität des Ereignisses: Studien zu Heinrich Bullingers Reformationsgeschichtsschreibung*, Leiden 2012 (Studies in the History of Christian Tradition 163), 20–25.

<sup>50</sup> Pelikan, *Creeks and Confession*, 481.

<sup>51</sup> Martin Foord, *Salvation accomplished: “Heinrich Bullinger on the gospel”*, in: *Celebrating the Reformation: Its Legacy and Continuing Relevance*, ed. Mark D. Thompson, Colin Bale and Edward Loane, London 2017, 103–118.

<sup>52</sup> Opitz, *Heinrich Bullinger als Theologe*, 185–187.

whole. In particular, there is focus on Bullinger's christology, viz. the deity and humanity of Christ in the context of the three persons of the economic Trinity working in unison. The elect are in Christ and, thereby, receive all the covenant promises and blessings of God.

*Keywords:* Heinrich Bullinger; Hans Asper; history of the covenant; fullness in Christ; law; promise and fulfillment; redemptive history

