

«Welcher nit gloubt der ist schon verdampft»:
Heinrich Bullinger and the
Spirituality of the Last Judgement

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For 19 March 1555 Bullinger noted in his diary «fnivi evangelium Mattheaei pro concione publica», marking the end of two years of *lectio continua* preaching of the Gospel at the Sunday morning service in the Grossmünster.¹ Such was Bullinger's industry that the following week (24 March) he completed his tour through Paul's first letter to the Corinthians – the biblical book for the Friday sermons – begun in February/March 1554. Bullinger's heady pace had been sustained for nearly twenty-five years, and it was his regular practice to preach three (in the early years up to six!) times a week on Tuesdays, Fridays and Sundays.² In addition to his sermons for the early morning services, Bullinger also preached on the principal days of the Reformed church year (Christmas, Easter, Pentecost) and the patronal festival of Felix and Regula in September, leading Fritz Büsser to estimate that between 7,000 and 7,500 sermons were delivered in Zurich by Zwingli's successor during his forty-four years as head of the church.³ These sermons formed the crucial artery of Bullinger's activity in Zurich, feeding all of his other intellectual, ecclesiastical, and political activities, with most of the ideas first expressed in the context of worship services recycled to fit a variety of contexts. The Word of God as the foundation for all human activity – this was as Bullinger believed it should be; yet, such a seemingly straightforward premise was in fact the basis of a deeply complex set of issues. We still know far too little about how Bullinger worked in formulating and disseminating his ideas, nor have we yet penetrated the dense web of interrelationships between his sermons and writings on the one hand, and, on the other, the wider orbit of his activities as head of a large church which consisted of more than a hundred urban and rural parishes.⁴ The large corpus of surviving sermons

¹ Heinrich Bullinger Diarium (Annales vitae) der Jahre 1504–1574. Ed. Emil Egli, Basle 1904, p. 47. On Bullinger's preaching see Fritz Büsser, «Bullinger – Der Prediger»: in *Wurzeln der Reformation in Zürich*, ed. by Fritz Büsser, Leiden 1985, 143–158.

² The routine of services in Zurich during Bullinger's time was well established: three services on Sunday in the Grossmünster, with one in Fraumünster, St Peter's, and the Predigerkirche, while on weekdays there was always one service in the Grossmünster and in one of the other city churches. In the Grossmünster Bullinger headed a team of five ministers, who would share the services. Büsser, «Bullinger – Der Prediger», p. 143.

³ Ibid.

⁴ The literature on Bullinger is still rather underdeveloped. For an overview of his life and thought, see Bruce Gordon, Heinrich Bullinger, in: *The Reformation Theologians. An Intro-*

forms a map of Bullinger's mental world; they provide a narrative structure, shaped by his language of biblical exposition, for the confusing array of domestic and international matters in which he found himself entangled. Bullinger spoke to the people of Zurich in sermons for almost fifty years, explaining the world in terms of scripture by choosing what he regarded as the appropriate text for particular situations. It was an intimate and complex relationship between the reformer and his adopted city, and there is much work to be done on the subject, but in this essay I shall attempt to open the discussion through an examination of one set of sermons which were delivered at a crucial moment.

This brings us back to the spring of 1555. Shortly before he concluded his preaching on Matthew, Bullinger published two sermons based on chapters 24 and 25 of the Gospel under the title *Das Jüngste Gericht*. The subject of these two sermons was Christ's own words on the final judgement of humanity, and *Das Jüngste Gericht* appeared in an octavo volume from the press of Christoff Froschauer sometime in January, bound together with John Calvin's *Defensio sanae et orthodoxae doctrinae*.⁵ The latter, printed simultaneously in Zurich and Geneva, was Calvin's defence of Swiss theology against the attacks of Joachim Westphal, and the joining at the hip of these two works, despite obvious differences of genre and language, was surely a public display of unity by two men who were never especially close.⁶ And the conjunction was not accidental, for Bullinger had been reading Calvin's *Defensio* as he was writing *Das Jüngste Gericht*. The French reformer's work had found favour in Zurich, although Bullinger, still deeply wounded by years of bitter conflict, suggested that Calvin had not been severe enough on Luther.⁷ For over ten years Bullinger and Calvin had been co-operating closely on various fronts, a subject which has received considerable attention, but what interests us here are the thematic connections between the

duction to Theology in the Early Modern Period, ed. by Carter Lindberg, Oxford 2002, 170–183. On his involvement with the Zurich Council, see Hans Ulrich *Bächtold*, Bullinger vor dem Rat. Zur Gestaltung und Verwaltung des Zürcher Staatswesens in den Jahren 1531 bis 1575, Bern 1982 (ZBRG 12). On Bullinger and the ministry, see Pamela *Biel*, Doorkeepers at the House of Righteousness. Heinrich Bullinger and the Zurich Clergy 1535–1575, Bern 1991 (ZBRG 15). On Bullinger and the clergy of Zurich, see Bruce *Gordon*, Clerical Discipline and the Rural Reformation. The Synod in Zurich, 1532–1580, Bern 1992 (ZBRG 16).
⁵ Diarium, p. 47.

⁶ Bernard *Cottret*, «Pour une sémiotique de la Réforme: Le Consensus Tigurinus (1549) et La Brève Résolution... (1555) de Calvin, in: AESC 39, 1984, 265–284. Also, Uwe *Plath*, Calvin und Basel in den Jahren 1552–1556, Zurich 1974, 174–192.

⁷ W. de *Greef*, The Writings of John Calvin. An Introductory Guide, trans. Lyle D. *Bierma* Grand Rapids, 1993, 190–193. Also, Joseph N *Tylenda*, The Calvin-Westphal Exchange. The Genesis of Calvin's Treatise against Westphal, in: Calvin Theological Journal 9, 1974, 182–209.

public polemics of this prominent double act and the development of Bullinger's thought during the crucial decade of the 1550s, when he produced his most important theological and pastoral works.⁸ *Das Jüngste Gericht* offers us a window on both Bullinger's method of working and how his biblical exegesis was integral to his perception of contemporary events.

Das Jüngste Gericht

*Das Jüngste Gericht*⁹ is typical of a type of text which appeared with increasing frequency during the second half of Bullinger's tenure as head of the Zurich church: the vernacular sermon or tract printed for literate lay people and clergy.¹⁰ All of these works were sparks from the anvil of his preaching, based on the book of the Bible he was currently expositing, and responding to contemporary religious controversies. They were central to the vast flow of pastoral literature which had its source in Bullinger's circle of churchmen and printers, who saw themselves as responsible for the dissemination of God's word in a form digestible by the wider public. The emphasis of the works was invariably upon the practical Christian life, didactic tracts intended to meet an audience not entirely persuaded by or understanding of the new faith, and they employed Augustine's practice of questions and answers. Within their own terms of reference these works were highly consistent, emphasising the same points repeatedly, but one is struck by the intentionally narrow range of topics treated.

The very form of *Das Jüngste Gericht*, with its two sermons, is itself an articulation of its principal argument – the centrality of judgement to Christianity. Christ on the last day will separate humanity into two groups – the

⁸ On Bullinger and Calvin's relationship, see Bruce Gordon, *Calvin and the Swiss Reformed Churches*, in: *Calvinism in Europe 1540–1620*, ed. by Andrew Pettegree, Alastair Duke, and Gillian Lewis, Cambridge 1994, 78.

⁹ *Das Jüngste Gericht Vnsers Herren Christi wie er das werde halten über all waelt am lesten tag vß dem heiligen Euangelio Matthei am 25. Capit mit zweyen Predigen vßgeleget zuo Zürych von Henrychen Bullingern ... Zu Zürych by Christoffel Froschouer M. D. L.V., Joachim Staedtke, Heinrich Bullinger Bibliographie (HBBibI), (Zürich, 1972), n. 281, pp. 135–136.*

¹⁰ Examples of other such works are: 'Von rechter Hilfe und Erretung in Nöten' (1552), 'Von wahrem beständigen Glauben' (1552), 'Von der Verklärung Christi' (1552), 'Von rechter Buße oder Besserung des sündigen Menschen' (1553), 'Vom heiligen Nachtmal' (1553), 'Vom Heil der Gläubigen' (1555), 'Das Jüngste Gericht' (1555), 'Bericht, wie die Verfolgen antworten sollen' (1559), 'Von der Bekerung des Menschen zu Gott' (1569), 'Wider die schwarzen Künste' (1570), 'Von höchster Freud und größten Leid des jüngsten Tages' (1572), 'Von der schweren Verfolgung der christlichen Kirchen' (1573), 'Predigten über den 130. Und 133 Psalm' (1574). On 'Wider die schwarzen Künste', see Bruce Gordon »God killed Saul»: Heinrich Bullinger on the Power of the Devil, in: *Demons, Vampires and Werewolves. The Revenant in European Culture*, ed. by Kathryn Edwards, Kirksville, MI., 2002, 236–261.

saved and the damned. The two sermons, therefore, address judgement, salvation, and damnation – the great divide between God’s chosen and rejected. Human life is given meaning through the separation, or purgation, of what is true from what is false. This is an Augustinian theme very much at the heart of Zwingli’s theology and reform programme with constant use of the binary language of spirit/flesh, purity/impurity, created/uncreated etc.¹¹ The first sermon contains the good news as Bullinger offers comfort to the faithful, assuring them that they will survive the final day. The sermon has something of the tone of a medieval *ars moriendi* in which Bullinger seeks to allay the fears of men and women about death with the assurance that Christ will save them. The second sermon, however, finds Bullinger in a more irritable, prophetic mood as he conjures up the full horror of Christ’s judgement with an angry enumeration and denunciation of those who can expect to be turned away by the judge and consumed in the conflagration.¹²

As with all of Bullinger’s pastoral works, the sermons operate on various levels and speak to different audiences.¹³ Given the length of the two sermons – the octavo volume runs to over a hundred pages – it is likely that the printed text is an amalgam of several sermons delivered on Matthew 24 and 25, although there is no evidence that the text conveys anything which would not have been preached from the pulpit. In a style typical of his vernacular works, Bullinger avoids reference to patristic (with the exception of one quotation from Augustine) or contemporary authors in favour of densely packed biblical quotations intended to demonstrate the clarity and harmony of the divine message. The strict biblicism, however, is shaped by a clear rhetorical strategy which opens with Bullinger’s intention to convey the drama of that final day. Christ will descend from the clouds and all humanity, the living and the dead, will be raised up before him to be judged. Christ will separate the faithful from the damned, drawing the former to his right and the latter to his left. Speaking first to those on his right he will assure them of their salvation and send them on their way to life in the presence of God, while the damned remain to hear his condemnation and judgement. Every aspect of the scene for Bullinger is redolent with meaning, as we shall see, and in the sermons he seeks to lead his listeners/readers through the event.

¹¹ On this see Peter *Stephens*, *The Theology of Huldrych Zwingli*, Oxford 1986, 142–146.

¹² Not surprisingly, given the shortness of his time in Zurich, Zwingli wrote little about the Last Judgement and the Book of Revelation figures only peripherally in his writings. The principal contemporary influences on Bullinger’s writing on the Last Judgement were his colleagues Leo Jud and Theodor Bibliander. See Irena *Backus*, *Reformation Readings of the Apocalypse*. Geneva, Zurich, and Wittenberg, Oxford 2000.

¹³ There is an extremely useful discussion of rhetorical strategies in preaching in Jay *Goodale*, *Pastors, Privation, and the Process of Reformation in Saxony*, in: *The Sixteenth Century Journal*, 33, 2002, 71–92.

There is a dualism in Bullinger's rhetorical purpose as he attempts to balance comfort with alarm. The pastoral intent cannot be to promote anxiety, for, as Bullinger remarks, it is out of fear that many have asked him about the Last Judgement. The proper pastoral use of fear is to raise the people to a state of alertness (*wachbarkeit*), which is for Bullinger both a moral and spiritual condition. <Wachbarkeit> is a harmonious balance of the inner and outer person distinguished by prayer and affective devotion, which are the fruits of the Spirit, and by a life of moral rectitude. The person waiting for Christ must not be passive before the prospect of judgement, for <wachbarkeit> involves all the senses, which must not only be alert for signs of the end, but should be active in fulfilling God's commandment of love. This watchfulness for the Last Judge is imperative because the people are living in the last days, facing imminent judgement.¹⁴

The dread reality of a final judgement is indeed the central message of the sermons but we need to distinguish the different realities Bullinger is addressing; alongside the literal/historical reading of the text he is also offering a form of realised eschatology, whereby the Last Judgement serves as a powerful metaphor in Zurich theology for the fundamental polarities in creation and human nature. The Last Judgement is both a future event and a present reality borne out in the lives of the people. The struggle between good and evil culminates with the divine judgement, but that event is the final resolution of what already exists in the lives of men and women, who will be measured according to their own judgements. Thus the Last Judgement is not an external, alien justice imposed upon the people, but a full revelation of their true nature. Those who have chosen Christ can expect to be saved by his righteousness, just as the evil, execrable works of the ungodly will be exposed in all their hideousness. Judgement is a mirror held up to the naked soul; it is about the revelation of the true person. In the eighty-fifth sermon on the Book of Revelation we find this idea expressed:

In the treatise of the last judgement is sene the end of al menne, life and death, felicitie and miserie, payne or torment, and unspeakable and heavenly rewarde. He that remembereth these things well abhoreth wickedness, and walketh in holy feare before God.¹⁵

It is judgement which gives meaning to the polarities of human existence (life/death, felicity/misery etc) and the spiritual key, in true Zurich fashion, is memory (<he that remembreth>), the ability to recall what God has revealed to humanity and apply it in one's life. Bullinger formulates his teaching with a nod to Augustine, though we need much more research in order to feel the

¹⁴ fol. A1r

¹⁵ Hundred Sermons, 575.

full texture of his argument. The Christian life requires an individual to be able to sort true images, or signs, from false ones, to be able to hear the Word of God and discern and retain its message. Memory of God's Word is divine illumination and it is through the power of the Spirit that men and women remain faithful to God and obey His commandments; it is both a gift and that which ultimately separates the sheep from the goats on the last day. Bullinger's development of Zwinglian spirituality is through his application of the Zwinglian Eucharist language of *memoria* to the Christian life.¹⁶ The Eucharist, so noisily and harmfully disputed by the Protestant reformers, is treated in these sermons in terms of Bullinger's pastoral vocabulary, allowing us to see that the dominant theological and political question was also at the heart of the spirituality of the Zurich reformer.

Contexts

Bullinger's message about the end of time was delivered in the particular setting of profound theological and social dislocation in Zurich during the 1550s. The preacher in the Grossmünster drew two themes from his biblical material to address these issues; first was the topic of good works; the second, already briefly mentioned, was the Eucharist. The events to which they pertained were the controversy over poor relief and the Westphal case as part of the ongoing dispute with the German Lutherans. These two themes are carefully woven into a treatment of the Last Judgement in order to establish the fundamental points that the Christian life is dependent upon good works, and that Christ's relationship to the faithful has been properly understood in the Zwinglian view of the relationship between a sign and that which it signifies.

As Bullinger traversed the short distance from his house to the Grossmünster the driving issue of the day could hardly have been disguised, the crisis of poor relief. As Hans Ulrich Bächtold has shown, during this period Bullinger began to speak out more forcefully on social matters, and in an address (*Fürtrag*) before the Zurich Council on 7 March 1551 Bullinger justified the intervention of the church in the political discussion of poor relief on the grounds of biblical authority.¹⁷ The situation in both the city and rural areas had grown desperate as large numbers of people were appearing at the

¹⁶ The subject of spirituality has not figured prominently in scholarship on the Zurich reformation. A useful starting point is Fritz Büsser, *The Spirituality of Zwingli and Bullinger in the Reformation of Zurich*, in: *Christian Spirituality. The High Middle Ages and Reformation*, ed by Jill Rait, New York 1988, 300–317.

¹⁷ Hans Ulrich Bächtold, *Heinrich Bullinger vor dem Rat. Zur Gestaltung und Verwaltung des Zürcher Staatswesens in den Jahren 1531 bis 1575*, Bern 1982, 240.

doors of churches and wandering the streets. In the meetings of the synod ministers increasingly reported that they were overwhelmed not only by the demands of those seeking assistance but also by the attendant problems of violence and criminality.¹⁸ Bullinger attempted to remind the Zurich Council of its promise to deploy resources garnered from the dissolution of religious houses for poor relief, but he railed in vain. In this context it is clear that Bullinger's sermons on the Last Judgement, and in particular the second, formed another salvo in the propaganda war with the Zurich Council over what to do with the swelling numbers of people left destitute by a cruel conjunction of climatic and economic conditions with political considerations.

The central issue arising from the Westphal controversy, as far as Bullinger was concerned, was the Lutheran doctrine of ubiquity, and his objection to this doctrine suffuses the sermons on the Last Judgement in two important ways: first, he repeatedly emphasizes that Christ is physically located in heaven at the right hand of the father and not in the world, and, secondly, in his language about the relationship between signs and signification. The relationship between Christ and the physical world, so crucial to the Zurich teaching on the Eucharist, is played out in the sermons on the Last Judgement by Bullinger's determination to argue to the people that although Christ is spatially separated – demonstrated by the fact that he descends and they will be raised up – he is truly present in them in faith, by which they imitate him through fidelity to his commands.

Bullinger's writings of the 1550s

Having completed his monumental *Decades* in 1549, Bullinger's works of the 1550s were largely focused on closely related pastoral and eschatological themes. The most significant publications in this respect were the *Summa christlicher Religion* (1556), *In Apocalypsim conciones centum* (1557), and the *Catechesis pro adultioribus* (1559). All of these were quickly translated into the vernacular and described themselves as attempts to explain the faith. The vocabulary of the subtitles is informative, with the repeated use of epithets such as the faith *gruendtlich eklaert* (Catechism); what *notwendig sye zuo wüssen, zuo glouben, zuo thuon* (*Summa*); and that the book of Revelation is *fürtraeffenlich und nutzbar*. The link between pedagogy and spirituality

¹⁸ Bruce Gordon, *Clerical Discipline and the Rural Reformation. The Synod in Zurich 1532–1580*, Bern 1992, 161–169. The situation was so dire that Bürgermeister Lavater addressed the synod in 1556 on the question of poor relief, warning the assembled clergy that the people were destituting themselves by wasting their money on clothes, drink, and gambling. StAZ E II.I. 446 20 October 1556 (Gordon, p. 163).

is explicitly made, reinforcing the central idea that the biblical word, when properly explained is a clear guide to the practical Christian life. In this respect *Das Jüngste Gericht* is most obviously connected with Bullinger's *Summa christlicher Religion* and *Sermons on Revelation*.¹⁹

Written against the background of the Bolsec affair in Geneva and the outbreak of the ferocious dispute between Calvin and Sebastian Castellio, Bullinger's *Summa* urgently requires scholarly scrutiny; it is Bullinger's most extensive treatment of the Christian life and contains his developed thought on various aspects of his spirituality, such as prayer and good works.²⁰ In the *Summa*, Bullinger, in the face of internecine Protestant warfare, the desperate plight of the people, and the fragile relations with the Zurich magistrates, sought to cast in relief the essentials of Christian living. And in the preface he articulates once again his guiding principle, that the Christian faith is clear and understandable, and that it is the duty of the church to grasp the truths God has revealed.²¹ This is precisely the point he wished to underscore in the sermons on the Last Judgement: all that is necessary for the Christian life is right before our eyes, but those eyes must be guided by faith. Bullinger largely omits from the *Summa* the extensive teaching on the Last Judgement developed in the *Das Jüngste Gericht*, choosing only to provide, in his treatment of the Apostles' Creed and again in the concluding section on «von tod und end», a brief recap of the argument.²²

During the 1550s Bullinger was also intensively engaged with eschatological questions, and *Das Jüngste Gericht* falls in the shadow of his *Hundred Sermons on the Apocalypse*, which appeared in Basle two years later in 1557 and was quickly translated into German, French, and English.²³ Despite

¹⁹ *Summa Christenlicher Religion. Darinn uss dem wort Gottes / one alles zancken und schaelten / richtig und kurz / anzeigt wirt / was einem yetlichen Christen notwendig sye zuo wüssen / zuo glouben / zuo thun und zuo lassen / uch zuo lyden / und saeliglich abzuosterben: in Artickel gestelt / durch Henrychen Bullingern. Zurich, 1556. Staedtke, HBBibl I, no. 283.*

²⁰ For a summary of Bullinger's views on the covenant in the *Summa*, see J. Wayne Baker, *Heinrich Bullinger and the Covenant. The Other Reformed Tradition*, Athens, Ohio 1980, 49–53. We await the results of the scholarly work on the *Summa* currently being carried out in Zurich by Roland Diethelm.

²¹ «so ist die Christlich Religion darumb nit unendsam und so manigfaelt / dann das ein yetlicher Christ nütdestminder in den raechten hauptpuncten wol unnd richtig kommen mag zuo einem einfalten und gnuogsamen verstand der waren Religion». *Summa*, fol. Aii^r.

²² A brief discussion of the Last Judgement is found in Bullinger's discussion of the Apostles' Creed (fol. Mviii^r) and again on fol. Zvii^r.

²³ I refer here to the English translation of 1561: *A Hundred Sermons upon the / Apocalyps of Jesu Christe, reveiled in / dede by Thangell of the Lorde: but seen or / receuyed and written by thapostle and Evange / list. S. John... [London, 1561]. Staedtke, HBBibl I, no. 355. The literature on the sermons is now fairly extensive: Irena Backus, *Reformation Readings*, 103–104; and her *Les Sept Visions et la Fin des Temps; les commentaires genevois de l'Apoca-**

some common ground between these two works, such as their shared emphasis on pastoral matters, it is noticeable that the sermons on the Last Judgement make sparing use of the Book of Revelation. There are some references sprinkled through the sermons, and Bullinger's description of the event is drawn from the judgement scene of Revelation 19, but *Das Jüngste Gericht* contains none of the historical speculations concerning the Church and the dating of Antichrist which populate Bullinger's *Hundred Sermons*.²⁴ All such reckonings and historical allusions have been put aside in favour of a discourse on the ethical implications of judgement. Nevertheless, the exegesis of the Book of Revelation was central to the religious language and mentality of the Zurich reformers in the middle decades of the century.²⁵

The First Sermon

The fundamental premiss of *Das Jüngste Gericht* is a Bullinger commonplace: scripture is absolutely clear to those who receive it in faith, either through reading or hearing, and when properly explained under the guidance of the spirit it tells us all that we need to know.²⁶ This sanguine emphasis

lypse entre 1539 et 1584 Geneva, Lausanne, Neuchâtel, 1997 (CRThPh 19); W. P. Stephens, 'Bullinger's Sermons on the Apocalypse', in: *Die Zürcher Reformation: Austrahlungen und Rückwirkungen*, ed by Alfred Schindler and Hans Stickleberger, Zurich 2001, 261–280; Richard Bauckham, *Tudor Apocalypse – Sixteenth Century Apocalypticism, Millenarianism and the English Reformation: from John Bale to John Foxe and Thomas Brightman* (Appleford, 1978); and his 'Heinrich Bullinger, the Apocalypse and the English', in: *The Swiss Connection: Manchester Essays on the Religious Connections between England and Switzerland during the 16th and the 20th Centuries*, ed by Henry D. Rack, Manchester, 1995, 9–54; Aurelio A. García Archilla, *The theology of history and apologetic historiography in Heinrich Bullinger: truth in history*, Lewiston, NY,

²⁴ Bullinger, *Hundred Sermons*, 461–465. Bullinger interprets the various aspects of Christ in Revelation 19, such as the horse, his crown, the garment with blood etc. The emphasis in the *Hundred Sermons*, in contrast to *Das Jüngste Gericht*, is upon liberation from persecution.

²⁵ The Swiss Confederation had once again stood at the brink of dissolution in 1547 following the publication of 'Der Endtchrist' by Rudolf Gwalther in 1546. This work, like 'Das Jüngste Gericht', was a collection of sermons, but what had inflamed the Catholic Confederates was Gwalther's identification of the papacy with Antichrist. After several extremely stormy sessions of the Swiss Diet, where it was demanded that Gwalther be punished, an agreement was reached that all sides should seek to control their clergy, a resolution which Bullinger did not find at all comforting. Apocalyptic language had dangerous political overtones and this must have weighed on Bullinger during his work on Revelation in the 1550s. See Bächtold, *Heinrich Bullinger vor dem Rat*, 94–104. Gwalther's work is entitled: *Der Endtchrist. Kurtze / klare und einfaltige bewysung in fünff Predigen be//griffen/ Daß der Papst zuo Rom / raecht / war / groß und eigentlich Endt//christ sye von welchem die H. Prophe//ten und Apostel gewyssagt unnd und gewarnet habend... (Zurich, 1546).*

²⁶ On Bullinger's articulation of this view in his *Hundred Sermons*, see Stephens, *Bullinger's Sermons*, p. 265.

upon the clarity of scripture was a hallmark of the Zurich reformation: God has revealed all that humanity needs to know, and with the tools which have been provided individuals may plumb the depths of divine wisdom and reveal its eternal truths.²⁷ The essential tools, as Zwingli had declared in his preface to the 1531 Bible, were those of philology, which enabled the properly trained to pull from the text of the Bible its authentic meaning.²⁸

But this was only part of the story. The spirituality of the Zurich reformers must be discussed in terms of *translatio*, by which God's Word is realised in the world. In the eyes of the Zurich reformers this involved a crucial bond between the Latinate and vernacular cultures, and *translatio* encompassed two closely related moments: first, the translation of God's word from the biblical languages into Latin and the vernacular, and, secondly, the shift from the study to the community through the discernment of the practical application of God's Word. The process of elucidating scripture – and in Zurich it was a process – remained, in the eyes of the reformers, a useless exercise unless it resulted in practical guidance for the faithful.²⁹ The mediating priesthood for Bullinger was no longer to be found at the altar, but in the pulpit, for the properly educated minister alone could bridge the distance between linguistic scholarship and the pastoral needs of the people.³⁰ The sermons in the three main Zurich churches were the public expression of a whole biblical exegesis industry in Zurich centred on the figures of Bullinger, Leo Jud, Theodor Bibliander, and Konrad Pellikan.

Das *Jüngste Gericht* offers a pessimistic estimation of what the returning Christ will find, as he will be awaited by only a few faithful. The signs of Christ's imminent return are everywhere, but nowhere more pronounced than in the behaviour of the people, who conduct themselves without restraint. Bullinger's assessment of his time reads like a morals mandate in reverse, a catalogue of all the problems to be found in the community, from lack of parental discipline to excessive drinking and eating. All of this is an af-

²⁷ It is sin which obscures passages in scripture and as a Christian enters more into the light of Christ those passages become clearer: «In uns allen zwaren ist dünckle der sünden und irrungen / aber das liecht Gottes worts / der tag des heiligen Evangelii / unnd der morgenstern der geist Christi / trybt die dünckle hin und waeg / das uns die Geschrift klar und heiter wirt. Summa, fol. Bviii^r».

²⁸ Die gantze Bibel der ursprunglichen Ebraischen und Griechischen waarheynt nach / auff's aller treüwlichschest verteütschet. Getruckt zuo Zürich bey Christoffel froschouer / im Jar als man zalt M. D. XXXI, 2^r.

²⁹ Bullinger makes this point in the preface to the Hundred Sermons, 2.

³⁰ The model for preaching is God's own revelation of his will to the Israelites. Bullinger stresses that all that was necessary was revealed in a comprehensible manner: «Unser Herr und Gott bat vom berg Synai mit verstentlicher spraach / die von allem volck wol verstanden ward / geredt. Die heyligen propheten habend geredt und geschriben in keiner froemdben / sunder in der Lands und muoter spraach». Summa fol. Bvii^r

front to God, who in the Scriptures (both Testaments!) has continuously warned of a judgement day. Although Bullinger emphasises the importance of Paul's words to the Athenians (Acts 17:29–31), where the Apostle argues that God has tolerated the blasphemies of humanity in order that men and women might have time to repent, in true Zurich fashion the harmony of the New Testament statements on judgement with those found in the Old is continually underlined.³¹ Bullinger believes that time had run its course and that judgement would be pronounced. He assembles all of Christ's words on the last judgement (Luke 22, I Thessalonians 5 etc.) to remind his readers that everything foretold by the Son of God has come true: «Zuo siner zyt aber fiel nit ein büchstab der worten Christi hin, der nit vilfaltig und mee für dann hinder erfuehlt wurde.»³² Signs are an essential part of Bullinger's eschatological discourse for they not only indicate God's mind, but serve as a warning to the faithful, who alone are able, in part, to discern them. The signs of Antichrist's triumph in the world are an indication of the end of time, and this must serve to warn Christians to prepare themselves. Bullinger will not, however, allow that any Christian can know the moment of God's judgement.³³

These «last times», Bullinger's nomenclature for his own day, are also designated as the «age of grace» (zyt der gnaden), by which Bullinger meant a time for repentance, a last chance. He wants to de-mystify the signs of the end by arguing that Christ interpreted all of these events for the faithful in Matthew 24 and 25, his last sermon before his arrest and passion where he addresses the Last Judgement. Matthew, according to Bullinger, has recorded Christ's sermon word for word, just as he had the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5–7), in order that no person might claim ignorance of God's intentions. All will be judged because all have been warned by the Son of God; again, the recurring key word is «wachbarkeit», the admonition to alertness and perseverance during godless times.³⁴ Judgement will come when human wickedness – Bullinger (in the *Hundred Sermons*) employs the favourite Zwinglian parable of the wheat and tares – has ripened: «As though he shulde say: the iniquitie of earthly men is grown up to the highest, therefore is it reason that it shulde be cut downe. And God alone knoweth, when the iniquitie of the earth is fulfilled».³⁵

The fierce warning of the opening section of the first sermon raises the curtain on a more pastoral passage in which Bullinger interprets a series of

³¹ fol. Aiv

³² fol. Av^r

³³ Bullinger, *Hundred Sermons*, 315.

³⁴ *Jüngste Gericht*, fol. Avii^r.

³⁵ *Hundred Sermons*, 467.

parables concerning divine judgement. Most significantly he seeks to comfort people against any fear that they will be rewarded according to their merits, which will fall short of what God demands. His consolation is that all that is good in humanity is a gift of God given in order that men and women might do good works and thereby honour God.³⁶ In his pastoral writings Bullinger builds upon his distinction between effort and merit; he does not want Christians to think of the latter, but rather he seeks to encourage the former. Christians will not, however, be judged according to their own efforts, but according to whether they remained ‹vigilant and true› to God’s gift. The language of ‹effort› was a pastoral minefield and Bullinger was well aware of the dangers of emphasizing the need for Christians to do good works. The consolation for afflicted souls, he argued, is that God’s gift of grace will preserve them on the final day; they will not have to speak or defend themselves against a prosecuting God, for Christ will be their defence. That, of course, was a mainstay of Protestant theology. But Bullinger’s purpose was, and this becomes clearer in the second sermon, to rouse people to the Christian life of activity. He preached good works because the Zwinglian doctrine of love is embodied in the terms ‹barmherzigkeit› (compassion) and ‹freundlichkeit› (friendship), an active love found in the regenerate Christian life.

Bullinger’s reflection on the nature of judgement must necessarily begin with Christ himself, for the Last Judgement can only be interpreted in terms of Chalcedonian Christology by which Christ is fully divine and human. What will be the nature of this judge who will descend from the heavens? Bullinger held that the faithful and the damned will behold him according to their attitude in life: those who rejected him will be confronted by the wounded Christ, whose sores remind the damned of their place in the crucifixion narrative and convict them according to their maltreatment of the Son of God. The faithful, in contrast, will see Christ in his glory, as the Apostles did at the Transfiguration. Judgement, Bullinger repeatedly emphasized, is revelation, a purgative process in which the outer layers are removed to show the true nature of the person. Bullinger’s description of the meeting of Christ and the individual at judgement has a distinctly mystical flavour, reflecting the enduring influence of medieval Augustinianism, the *Devotio moderna*, and his colleague Leo Jud. Although Bullinger will not allow any pleading at the moment of judgement – humans can say nothing in their defence – Christ’s appearance involves a reciprocity suggested by the dynamic of the scene. Christ physically descends from the heavens to be met by the ascend-

³⁶ Bullinger argues in the *Summa* that the purpose of Scripture is to teach people God’s will so that they might do good works: ‹Dann alle gschriftt vonn Gott yngeistet / ist nütz zur leer / zur straaff / zur verbesserung unn zur züchtigung / die da ist in der geraechtigkeit / uff das der diener Gottes gantz und ußgemacht / zuo allem guoten werck gerüst sye.› fol. Bv.

ing faithful in whom he is spiritually present. Bullinger refers here to his distinctive emphasis on the indwelling of God in the person through the Holy Spirit; faith, for Bullinger is not descriptive of a relationship between a person and God, but refers to the very presence of God in that person.³⁷ The union of Christ and the believer at the judgement is an expression of Bullinger's profound mysticism. At that moment the extent to which Christ is present in each individual is revealed.

And all humanity will be assembled before him and behold him in his human nature and all the faithful will be overcome with joy when in an instant they recognize that their judge is their saviour, that in him they have found grace, redemption, unity, reconciliation, their eternal inheritance through his sacrifice. Also in the Lord, who now appears before the world, [they see] that the Christian faith is the true faith and the word of the holy Gospels is the indubitable word of God and that all shall now be fulfilled and is human as the faith and the Word of God predicted.³⁸

It is an entirely divine moment, with Christ as both judge and defendant, and humanity, according to Bullinger, reduced to silence. The silence of humanity before Christ again points to Bullinger's mysticism, for judgement leads to reconciliation and harmony. In this final consummation we find the resolution of the various dichotomies, such as flesh/spirit and external/interior, which formed the backbone of Zurich theology. In Bullinger's distinctive use of Eucharistic language to describe the Christian life, the judgement is the fulfilment of *memoria* through the unification of the interior faith of the individual with the external physical Christ. The individual and the object of faith, Christ, come together in a union prefigured by the liturgy of the Lord's Supper, thus demonstrating the proper relationship between signs and that which they signify.

Bullinger considered at some length the significance of the throne on which Christ will be seated. It represents, as Bullinger had already argued in his *Hundred Sermons*, Christ's justice, indeed, the supreme justice which will brook no opposition.³⁹ All will recognize it and be overwhelmed. Bullinger revisited the extensive description of the Last Judgement found in Revelation 19, which he interpreted not so much as an accurate account of what will happen, although it will happen as God has revealed, but as God's way of preparing the people for the end of time. John's vision of the Last Judgement is a warning, a sign of what is to come and a reminder that people must pre-

³⁷ On this see the important article by Mark S. Burrows, *Christus intra nos Vivens: The Peculiar Genius of Bullinger's Doctrine of Sanctification*, in: ZKG 98 1987, 56.

³⁸ fol. Bii^v

³⁹ Bullinger's interpretation of the imagery of Revelation 19 is found in his *Hundred Sermons*, 465–466.

pare while there is still time.⁴⁰ The faithful should have already taken their judge to heart (<in unsere hertzen disen richter also herrlich ynbildind>) so that when he arrives they know the truth and will greet him with joy.

All who live and have ever lived will be called for judgement and nothing shall be hidden from the judge. Bullinger develops the theme of individual and corporate culpability by considering how at the moment of judgement the conscience shall prosecute and the deeds of the ungodly will be revealed before the assembled mass of humanity. He invokes the very human fear of embarrassment by noting that nothing will remain disclosed except for the faithful who, in a reference to John 5, will have their sins covered by Christ. Humiliation may await only the ungodly, but Bullinger knew from pastoral experience and years of association with the Ehebericht in Zurich the power of rumour and gossip in the community and the lengths to which people would go to conceal damaging news from family, neighbours, and authorities.⁴¹ He made good use of this to warn his listeners about the disclosure facing those who fail to put their life in order in this world. It may be painful to settle one's account now, but it is nothing compared to what will happen at the final moment when all shall see what an individual has done and thought.⁴²

Bullinger then turns to the relationship between the living and the dead, paraphrasing the description in Paul's letter to the Thessalonians (1 Thessalonians 4:13–18) of Christ's return and the summoning of the dead and the living. Bullinger reiterates points made earlier, such as how humanity will rise up to meet the judge in the clouds and that there shall be no resistance. In that moment all creation will, for the first time since the fall, be wholly obedient, just as the animals were in coming to Noah's ark;⁴³ the whole of humanity will respond to Christ with child-like fear (*kindtlicher forcht*) as the power of God is felt. All shall tremble. Although Bullinger loosely employs a range of images, mostly drawn from scripture, to describe the event, the judgement scene is presented to his listeners primarily as a courtroom drama which opens with the judge taking his seat before the assembled body of humanity. There is, however, a fundamental difference in that this trial has no defence, for humans will not be able to answer the charges against them; in Bullinger's words, no petitions or answers, speeches or counter-complaints, witnesses or supporters will be entertained. The prosecution, judge, and jury will be the conscience, which will accuse and convict the person.⁴⁴ The trial,

⁴⁰ Jüngste Gericht, fol. Bv^r.

⁴¹ The dynamics of sin, discipline, and communal response in Zurich have recently received thorough attention in Francisca Loetz, *Mit Gott handeln. Von den Zürcher Gotteslästerern der Frühen Neuzeit zu einer Kulturgeschichte des Religiösen*, Leinen 2002.

⁴² fol. Bv^v

⁴³ fol. Bviii^r

⁴⁴ fol. Ci^r

Bullinger is very clear, is only for the guilty, for although all humanity stands condemned, the faithful will be spared the horror of facing the judge by the fact that this judge turns out to be their key witness. In Bullinger's account of the judgement in *Das Jüngste Gericht* the faithful are quickly removed leaving the damned to face the process.

The image of Christ in Bullinger's account of the Last Judgement embodies the Zwinglian language about the Son of God. It is his suffering (*lyden*) which reveals him in his full humanity; the suffering Christ as the redeemer of a suffering people is a central theme of Zwinglian spirituality. The physicality of his flesh and blood is what unites him to humanity, not in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, but in the sacrament of the Christian life. The confirmation of the unity of the faithful with Christ is found in the moment that he meets each person as their wounded saviour. These very wounds, which are the signs of redemption, are also what convict the godless, for they are visible expressions of their unbelief.

The decisive moment is the separation of the saved from the damned, and, not surprisingly, Christ will divide humanity into two unequal groups. Bullinger stays with the contrast with earthly courts and human forms of judgement, where despite sincere efforts to ensure fairness there is inevitable confusion and injustice on account of the chasm between outward appearance and inner reality. Bullinger turns to the situation of religion to make his point. Humans, he argues, are divided according to their religions (Jews, Turks, and Anabaptists – Catholics, curiously, are not mentioned) with each maintaining that their faith is the true one. Yet, even among evangelical Christians one person is said to be devout and honourable while another is despised, although in truth it may be the second person who loves God while the first deftly simulates piety. Human judgement, he concludes for his listeners, has no insight into the thoughts of individuals, and who is truly innocent or guilty will remain a matter of debate. In contrast, for Christ there will be no hesitation: judgement, followed by sentencing, will be quick and decisive, because all hidden thoughts of the heart will be openly displayed.

Lest his hearers should find this too disquieting, Bullinger turns to another set piece of Zwinglian images of Christ, the Good Shepherd. The language, of course, is taken from John 10 and Bullinger builds around it a discussion of Christ's judgement, essentially covering the same ground again, but this time in a more comforting manner. The sheep will be placed on the right and the goats to the left; what distinguishes the sheep is that they have heard the voice of Christ, have responded in faith, and are God's friend (*Gottes fründ*).⁴⁵ This idea of the friendship of God ran deeply in the writings

⁴⁵ fol. Cii^r

of the Zurich reformers.⁴⁶ It is found in Zwingli, who commented in his *De vera et falsa religione* that ‘God is the beginning and foundation of all true and lasting friendship’. The term is used with particular frequency in the writings of Jud and Bullinger as an expression of divine and human community; it speaks to the transforming of human relationships through the love of Christ and of the intimacy of the believer’s relationship with the Son of God. The reward of faith is friendship with God, but Christ’s ministry and suffering was also a supreme act of friendship, which makes that final union possible. Any one who seeks another way to God than Christ has forfeited that friendship and will be found among the goats: starkly put, those who do not believe are damned (‘welcher nit gloubt wirdt verdampft’).

Christ then speaks to both the saved and the damned. To the sheep he says ‘come here the chosen of my father’, an invitation which Bullinger argues is the final purification from all that is impure (*unrein*), that is sin, the devil, and death.⁴⁷ Who then are the chosen of God? They are the children of Abraham. Bullinger turns to the language of the covenant to make the point that this new relationship is through the faith of Abraham (‘mit und durch den glouben Abrahams’) in Christ. Those who have believed in Christ are summoned to the place prepared for them where joy surpasses any art of expression by the tongue.⁴⁸ There are two crucial aspects to Christ’s invitation: first, the faithful are told they are to ‘inherit the kingdom’ which, secondly, ‘has been prepared for you from the start of the world’. Here we find Bullinger’s only, and rather implicit, reference to predestination, suggested as a cause for joy as God has chosen the faithful for a heavenly home from the moment of creation. More than that Bullinger chooses not to say.

Bullinger is not yet ready to discuss the fate of the goats; they take centre stage in the second sermon. He is more concerned at this point to encourage rather than dispirit, and by assuring the faithful that God has marked them for salvation, he turns to the vital subject of good works, commenting that he has frequently been asked about the merit of human works and what a Christian should do. Although he offers a fairly pithy response, Bullinger hammers away at the subject, producing a forest of biblical citations in support of his central argument that good works are good only insofar as they flow from God’s grace.

⁴⁶ I am currently working on a study of the term ‘friendship’ in Zwinglian writings. In the fifth sermon of the second Decade Bullinger touches upon friendship in a manner characteristic of the Zurich reformers by linking it with God’s central purpose for humanity: ‘that is for the preserving of friendship and societe among men, the Lorde in the Gospell saith: whatever yee would that men shoulde doe to you, doe yee the same to them’. Decades, 102.

⁴⁷ fol. Civ^r

⁴⁸ fol. Cv^r.

Therefore, whoever would wish to be a faithful Christian should above all seek true faith in Christ from which shall come works of love as the Lord has shown here and in other places. Such a person will be judged on the last day at the Last Judgement and will find a merciful judge.⁴⁹

What is required of Christians is faithful obedience to Christ's command to love one's neighbour. This is clearly the standard Protestant line, but the particular emphasis on the ethical imperative of the commandment was a hallmark of southern German/Swiss theology. Further, the weight which Bullinger gives to the intimacy between God and the individual is arresting. This returns us to the dilemma mentioned above: on the one hand, Bullinger wants to underscore the importance of human activity whilst, on the other, he maintains that God is the source of all goodness. In order to avoid instilling in his parishioners any sense that they cannot meet God's demands, Bullinger insists that God, in his love, has provided his people with all that is necessary for them to fulfil his demands. He does this because his love for his children is so consuming.⁵⁰ Bullinger is speaking here to the crucial dynamic of his theology: God's covenantal relationship with his people is determined by one demand – that the people be faithful (*gehorsam*) to his commandments. It is not surprising, therefore, that the damned are frequently named by Bullinger as the <disobedient> (*ungehorsam*). The language of obedience frames Bullinger's theological and pastoral thought, and he is at pains to emphasise that it is the authentic human response to God's friendship. He wants his listeners to understand that God's devotion to humanity is such that He does not ask anything of men and women that they cannot achieve with His assistance. The path of obedience, for Bullinger, is not through the sacramental structure of the medieval church, but is marked by the temporal and ecclesiastical ordinances of the state, which through their teaching and discipline provide the guide to eternal life. For a man involved in a bitter dispute with the Zurich magistrates over poor relief, the preaching that the institutions of the state are instruments of God's mercy must, at moments, have stuck in the throat. Perhaps that is why he ends the first sermon with the biting question:

Whoever possesses worldly wealth and goods and sees his brother suffer need and closes his heart and [is without] compassion... where is the love of God in him?⁵¹

⁴⁹ fol. Cvii^v.

⁵⁰ <Dann so lieb sind wir menschen dem Herren das er uns goent sine gaben, darzuo gern wil von uns ufnemmen was wir im zuo dienst nach sinem wort thuond.> fol. Cviii^r

⁵¹ fol. Div^v

The Second Sermon

The second sermon drawn from Matthew 25:41–46, forms the other half of the diptych and considers Christ's words to those on his left. As the first sermon was intended to comfort the faithful by assuring them that they will be greeted by the saviour at that moment, the second deals in fear, as Bullinger reminds his readers that just as God rewards good works so too he harshly judges sin.⁵² Bullinger employs binary language throughout, yet this time he emphasizes that the polar opposites remain bitterly unreconciled. Christ's disposition and attitude towards the unfaithful is the direct inversion of the love and gentleness shown to the faithful:

Just as he before the faithful has said, they shall inherit the kingdom that has been prepared for them, so also he promises the damned the eternal fire which the devil and his angels, or fallen ones, has prepared for them.⁵³

Christ dismisses the damned from his presence and wishes to hear nothing further of them. Why, Bullinger asks, would he never want them back? The answer, he responds, is to be found in the nature of their offence. They have desecrated life, and Christ is the true life. Consequently, they have most grievously offended against the Son of God. This interpretation of the eternal judgement contains the language of purity, which is the crucial partner to obedience in Bullinger's spirituality. The true Christian life, the life of obedience, is free of defilement; it is pure, as God is pure. This biblical sense of purity (*Reinheit*), drawn from the commands in Leviticus 11:41–45, was prominent in Zwingli's preaching, and its iconoclastic message, and writing. The Zurich reading of the Old Testament was to equate purity with holiness, and for Bullinger the Christian life must involve purgation, the stripping away of all that is unclean (*unrein*). The final judgement, therefore, is the fulfilment of Christian spirituality, a purifying of all that has remained unclean.

Bullinger is remorseless in blaming the damned for their fate; they separated themselves from life (Christ) in this world through their pursuit of their own lusts, and Christ shall reward them with eternal separation. In language drawn from the *City of God*, Bullinger speaks of the faithful keeping company with God whilst the damned cavort with the devil – a reference to both the proper and perverted forms of friendship raised earlier. Bullinger emphasises that the Last Judgement will put paid to all false logic in the world through the separation of good and evil. Such distorted thinking is to be found in common perceptions held by the people, and Bullinger dwells at some length upon the questions which arise out of what he perceives as a fail-

⁵² fol. Dv^v

⁵³ fol. Dvi^r

ure to comprehend God's justice. Some wonder, he writes, whether God will punish all wrongdoing or whether he can even see every transgression, while others believe that God is unjust because evil prospers in the world. These are familiar topoi set out by Bullinger to be rejected in turn, as he asserts that in each case the Bible offers unequivocal counterproofs.

The false and true love found among humanity is matched by two different types of fear, that of the ungodly who do not wish to lose what they have, and the fear of God which is the starting point of all spirituality.⁵⁴ The godly have in their hearts a fear of God's judgement, for they know the magnitude of their unworthiness. Yet they are able to comfort one another with the promises contained in scripture that God shall not fail to reward good and punish evil. This is why they flee to Christ as their only defence in the final court; it is the Son who will pronounce the word of judgement, but he is also the one judged, and by his merit alone the faithful are saved. There is, however, a subtle shift in the sermon at this point as Bullinger moves away from the subject of faith towards good works. What will damn the unfaithful will be Christ's judgement of the fruits of their unbelief: they did not feed, clothe, house, or visit him because they did none of these things for the poor. Their lack of compassion or charity demonstrates the absence of faith in Christ. They have not believed so they are damned. Without faith there is no love, and without love there can be no good works. This is the simple formula which Bullinger employs during the remainder of the sermon as he turns to the principal ethical dilemmas of his day.

Bullinger's withering contempt falls most directly on those who are prosperous and wealthy yet do nothing for the poor, although almost as bad are those tepid souls who would like to help, but do nothing:

When however you wish to help, but do not, you have a spiritual unfaithfulness (or disloyalty) (*gystige untruew*) in your heart. You prefer silver, gold, tatters and waste, wretched corruptible things to your God and neighbour, who has been created in the image of God. How can one think that you demonstrate love of God when you do not love him or demonstrate any compassion towards your neighbour?⁵⁵

Whether it be human weakness or a hardened rejection of God matters little to Bullinger, the result is the same, a grotesque offence against Christian love which will be judged by Christ. Such actions reveal, at least to some degree, the inner life of a person, and in his discussion of ethics Bullinger makes repeated reference to offensive ungodly conduct as a sign (*zeichen*) of unfaith. The language of signs is important to Bullinger's treatment of the Christian

⁵⁴ fol. Ei^v

⁵⁵ fol. Eiv^r

life and provides men and women with the possibility of reading their spiritual state. Bullinger links discipline (*zucht*) with love (*liebe*) reinforcing his belief that the ordered soul becomes manifest in an ordered life. Therefore, just as indiscipline is a sign of unbelief, the peaceful (*ruwig*) heart reflects a good relationship with God, a certainty of one's salvation.⁵⁶ The particular issue which animates Bullinger is necessity (*notdurfft*) and he rehearses the arguments for why it is essential to the Christian life. Each person must be willing to aid those in need, even if it means considerable personal sacrifice. People will object, Bullinger writes, that they themselves have little and if they give to the poor they too will have to send their children begging to others. Against this Bullinger replies that necessity (*notdurfft*) is permitted by God so that people may be thankful for what they have and use material things in good conscience. In giving to the poor, he assures his audience, they are not expected to make their wives, children, parents, and other dependents starve or freeze. What God requires is that anything extra should be given to those in need. Quoting 1 Timothy 6:8 (‘But if we have food and clothing we will be content with that’) Bullinger argues that people should not keep any excess when there are others without food or clothing.

Bullinger then turns to the issue of personal possessions and wealth. In the New Testament, he states, there are examples of venerable wealthy men, such as Nicodemus and Joseph of Aramathea, who did not give away all their money yet were righteous. With perhaps one eye on his fellow guildsmen and the magistrates, Bullinger explains that their wisdom was in using their resources well. The argument has strong echoes of the Aristotelean concept of magnanimity, whereby a wealthy man who uses his largesse to build the community does a virtuous act, while the one who simply hoards it for personal use is to be despised. Bullinger was in dangerous territory here with his political masters. The subjects of usury and taxation interested him very much and he had expressed some forthright views on the topics. Bullinger distinguished between usury which was lawful, whereby interest was legitimately gained on legally grounded transactions, and that which was not, which was the unlawful taking of interest.⁵⁷ With this distinction in mind Bullinger condemned in particular the Zinskauf (a usurious rent-charge) as it was reducing the rural farmers to impecuniosity.⁵⁸ Bullinger's agreement with the Zurich magistrates was that he would say little about those financial arrangements which had been sanctioned by the council and would speak out

⁵⁶ This point is stressed in the Summa, where Bullinger writes: ‘also das er in sinem hertzen ruwig und mit Gott wol zefriden / sinen glouben mit allerley zucht / eer / trüw und liebe oder andern derley tugenden / zuo Gottes lob und eer / und der menschen besserung / erzeige / ouch mit wachen und baetten des herren zuokunfft warte.’ Fol. Aiii^r.

⁵⁷ On this see Eric Kertridge, *Usury, Interest and the Reformation*, Aldershot 2002, 28–30.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 43.

only against the profiteering rampant throughout the land. By his own admission, Bullinger understood little about financial transactions.

The maintenance of proper and lawful business arrangements was a godly duty. Bullinger produces a hierarchy of sin which has at its summit those who fail to care for their families and household or to look after those, such as widows and orphans, who have no means of supporting themselves. Bullinger pulls no punches: not to care for one's family is a sign of unbelief and the person will be counted among the damned: «one who does not care for his own house has betrayed the faith and is, therefore, an unbeliever». ⁵⁹ Usurers (*wuocherer*) come next, and their primary offence is not greed, though that is bad enough, but the absence of compassion (*unbarmhertzig*). Not only do they refuse to feed, clothe, or house those in need, but when others are unable to pay they have them thrown in prison and seize their possessions. ⁶⁰ This is entirely contrary to God's will and such men will have little chance on the final day. Their parsimony and hard heartiness, in Bullinger's mind, distinguish them little from the next group, those who enjoy too much licence. Such men and women fill the disciplinary records of the sixteenth century, and their offences must have been wearily familiar to Bullinger by 1555: drinking, dancing, card playing, violations of the clothing ordinances, etc. What in particular disturbed Bullinger was the excessive consumption of food and wine, especially the latter. The drinking culture in rural areas was a persistent problem for the church and Bullinger returned to this subject innumerable times during his career as Antistes. His familiar warning is taken from Luke 21. ⁶¹ Those who avariciously consume the food and drink provided by God are considered by Bullinger to be nothing more than pigs (*schwyn*).

Next to be scourged are those magistrates who abuse their office, who are reminded that they must answer to a superior judge. This was naturally awkward territory, but by the 1550s Bullinger was not inclined to step away from confrontation, and he begins with a familiar theme: the preservation of true religion is dependent on the honest and Christian men holding temporal offices in the cities and rural areas. But his particular interest is the question of poor relief and he returns to the subject. A most evident sign that the Gospel has been neglected is the failure to provide for the poor and destitute, an acid test for faith. The care of the poor is given a sacramental hue when Bullinger

⁵⁹ fol. Evi^v

⁶⁰ fol. Evii^r

⁶¹ «Keep a watch on yourselves; do not let your minds be dulled by dissipation and drunkenness and worldly cares so that the great Day closes upon you suddenly like a trap; for that day will come on all men, wherever they are, the whole world over. Be on the alert, praying at all times for strength to pass safely through all these imminent troubles and to stand in the presence of the Son of Man». Luke 21:34–36. Quoted by Bullinger on fol. Fi^f.

draws a parallel between feeding the body and the soul. As Christ has provided the spiritual food in the bread and wine the faithful should respond to this gift by feeding the poor and homeless.⁶² The care of the poor, so central to Bullinger's spirituality, is referred back to Christ's response to the damned when they ask where he was when they should have fed him. All of these ethical demands are placed in their eschatological setting:

All and sundry will have to give account at the Last Judgement to the righteous judge for all their affairs but in particular for how they have provided food and drink for the Christian community and how they cared for the Word of God and the offices of the state.⁶³

God's terms are non-negotiable and quoting Matthew 15 Bullinger argues that there can be no excuses for failure to fulfil the divine command, and humans cannot apply to any moral standard other than that set down by God. Moral compromise, even that seeming most justifiable to human reason, is anathema to true religion, and Bullinger revisits this theme in his denunciation of the alacrity with which people abandon the absolute conditions of God's covenant. The repeated emphasis on the lucidity of God's will is intended to head off any suggestion of mitigating circumstances on the Last Day, when some might hope to justify themselves. The only justice is Christ.

Bullinger had the evil of such compromise very much in mind when he made his admonition, also to be found in the *Hundred Sermons*, to those who hold offices that the principal duty of the magistrate is to ensure the propagation of the Gospel. Any shirking of this responsibility will be judged most severely. Following those who practice corruption in office come the equally offensive pliers of war. Bullinger's lifelong revulsion towards war is well known and he returns here to a familiar theme – the moral turpitude brought by unjust wars and violence.

The Judge requires truth, friendship, love, and prudence towards our neighbour by feeding, giving drink, clothing, housing, comforting the poor and widows. War is directly opposed to all of these.⁶⁴

From war comes destruction and rape, with all the fruits given by God plundered and misused. All the essential institutions, such as churches and hospitals, are destroyed and the laws of the land are despised. How, Bullinger declares, can one adequately bewail such destruction?

The care of prisoners is next and Bullinger combines an admonition to the magistrates that justice be carried out rigorously and fairly with a reminder

⁶² fol. Fii^r.

⁶³ fol. Fii^r.

⁶⁴ fol. Fiv^r.

to the faithful that they should visit prisoners and treat them as Christ treated the thief on the cross.⁶⁵ He cites the Samaritan of Luke 10 as the pastoral model for Christians who seek to avoid caring for prisoners or the sick on the grounds that they have no qualifications. Christ requires each Christian to do whatever he/she can. Bullinger remarks that care of the sick is rare among Christians for most in the city wish neither to see nor hear those who are diseased or dying.⁶⁶ Bullinger has nothing but contempt for those who flee illness and the sick. He asks bitterly:

Do you wish that Christ should abandon you in your illness, anxiety, and emergency? Of course not!⁶⁷

The faithful should put their faith in God and serve the sick without fear of illness or death. Think, Bullinger reminds his listeners, of those final words of Christ to the damned: <Depart from me, when I was sick you did not visit me>.

Finally Bullinger arrives at the clergy, who he says will be judged according to their conduct in the pulpit and in the parish, in particular whether they engaged in works of love, friendship, and compassion towards the parishioners whilst punishing the wicked, whom he names as usurers, oppressors of the poor, and all involved in war.

Bullinger concludes with an admission that there are others who might have been named for their sins had his primary purpose been to provide a catalogue of shame, but his true intention was to illustrate from scripture a fundamental point, that God's Word is clear, comprehensible, and unchanging, and that, therefore, no person will be excused on the Last Day. God has revealed in Scripture all that needs to be known about the final judgement and what is expected of each man and woman. Bullinger could not put it any more plainly than when he concludes:

You, who would be a Christian cannot be excused for not having performed works of compassion (*barmhertzigkeit*)⁶⁸

Compassion is the last word in Bullinger's spiritual vocabulary to be treated in *Das Jüngste Gericht* and he makes his meaning utterly clear. Compassion is love of one's neighbour grounded in a total trust in God's promises. The opposite of this virtue is not simply heartlessness but a tepid love which finds justifications for inactivity. Bullinger enumerates the excuses familiar to him:

⁶⁵ fol. Fv^r

⁶⁶ On the unwillingness of many ministers to visit the sick, see *Gordon, Clerical Discipline*, 169–175.

⁶⁷ fol. Fviii^r

⁶⁸ fol. Fviii^v.

some say, he remarks, that they do not know what do, while others claim that they fear what the poor will do to them, for they are violent. Others simply find themselves overwhelmed by the extent of poverty and feel they cannot make any difference. On this last point Bullinger agrees that no one person can solve all the problems, but that each person has a responsibility to do whatever one can (*Thuo als vil du magst*).⁶⁹ God, Bullinger assures his listeners, will respond positively to those who seek to help those in need, but he will reject those who attempt to shield themselves from their responsibilities:

These and other similar excuses are not adequate, certainly not before God. We stand before God and his judgement. He sees us in our hearts and knows our thoughts. Let us go justly before him. For the end of all things is near.⁷⁰

This can be reduced to one simple choice: does a person desire eternal life or damnation? The catalogue enumerated in the second sermon was not intended as a forensic examination of different forms of sin, rather it is an illustration of one point: all disobedience is the consequence of the absence of faith. Failure to make the necessary choices in this life required by God's covenant cannot be overlooked, for, as Bullinger continues to remind his listeners, judgement is inherent in creation and the Christian life, and inner judgement will give way at the end of time to Christ, who will separate truth from falsehood and damn all unbelief. About this there can be no doubt, as Christ has left ample instructions in the Scriptures, and his words in the New Testament confirm the judgements of the Old Testament prophets. Bullinger refers to book 21 of the *City of God*, to quote Augustine's refutation of those who deny the fires of Hell by averring that Scripture has plenty of evidence for the eternal damnation of those who reject God. For Bullinger those who find themselves on Christ's left are the unbelievers, but what interests him more in this sermon is the fruits of their unbelief, such as corruption, violence, and greed and how they can be identified in the world.

Das Jüngste Gericht is not a major work, but with its mixture of implicit and explicit themes, these two sermons must be read in the context of Bullinger's fundamental writings of the 1550s, a period of remarkable theological synthesis, and of the extraordinary social and religious upheaval in which Zurich found itself embroiled. In these sermons we hear Bullinger in full prophetic voice, thundering at the Zurich magistrates and angry with the prosperous burghers and established families of the city, fearful of God's judgement, and exhorting the people to good works. The sermons throw light on the manner in which Bullinger linked together biblical exegesis with the events of his day

⁶⁹ fol. Gi^v.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

in an almost daily dialogue from the pulpit and how that relationship was expressed through a range of rhetorical strategies. He sought to address the farmer and the magistrate at the same time, encouraging the first whilst castigating the latter by drawing upon a thesaurus of biblical images to apply his message in different measures. On one level the sermons are pedagogical and straightforward, reflecting the Zurich theological emphasis on the clarity of Scripture. Yet we have also seen that Bullinger frequently deals in multiple meanings; the treatment of the Last Judgement is both a discussion of a future event and a metaphor for the Christian life, both corporate and individual, and woven through the text is a commentary on contemporary political and theological discourses.

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