

The Place of Predestination in Zwingli and Bucer

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In both Zwingli and Bucer there is a strong sense of the sovereignty of God and of his initiative in our salvation. Yet there are some significant differences between them in the ways in which they express God's sovereignty and in which it shapes their thought. This can be seen in particular in the different place that the doctrine of predestination has in their theology.

For Zwingli predestination was not developed until 1526, and even then it remained subordinate to his doctrine of providence and his general stress on the sovereignty of God. For Bucer, however, it was developed earlier, in 1524, and helped to give a particular shape to his theology. In this context it is interesting to note that they emphasised different texts in their discussion of predestination. For Bucer it was Romans 8:28-30, a text with limited importance for Zwingli. It had from the first a vital role in Bucer's understanding of predestination and also an important bearing on the way predestination affected other parts of his theology. For Zwingli the emphasis was rather on Romans 9, and a verse such as Romans 9:21.

As Zwingli paid less attention to predestination, it is helpful first to focus on his doctrine of providence, which he sees as the mother of predestination, and then to examine both the context and the various ways in which he used predestination in the five years between 1526 and his death in 1531.

With Bucer our main concern is also with five years, from 1524 to 1529, though there is some reference to other works. His later works do not differ substantially from his earlier ones, even though he treats the subject more extensively and systematically in his commentary on Romans in 1536 than elsewhere¹. We will consider his early exposition of predestination, with particular reference to Romans 8:28-30, and some of the ways in which this affects his theology, differentiating it from Zwingli's. The presentation of Bucer calls into question, though for the most part implicitly, the position expounded by *August Lang*.

¹ A number of issues raised by predestination are not discussed here. I have dealt with some of them in: *William Peter Stephens, The Holy Spirit in the Theology of Martin Bucer*, Cambridge 1970 [abbr.: Stephens, Holy Spirit].

Predestination is not a fundamental element in Zwingli's theology². Indeed it hardly features in his theology until 1526 when he used it as an argument in his discussion of original sin. This is surprising, as it is a matter which had engaged his mind for several years.

There is evidence that Zwingli had grappled with predestination in his reading of the fathers, the schoolmen, and contemporary writers. In his marginal notes he marked the discussion in Origen and the distinction between foreknowledge and predestination in the fathers³. His study of Aquinas led to his recollection, albeit inaccurate, in «The Providence of God» of what Aquinas had said on foreknowledge⁴. He had also read – probably in 1516 – Eck's semi-Pelagian «Chrysopassus seu VI Centuria de praedestinatione»⁵. Moreover Myconius wrote a letter to him on 11 July 1521 which raised the issue of free will, the view of some that it did not matter how they lived if they were elect (or alternatively not elect), and the charge of injustice made against God. Myconius knew what had been said by Paul in Romans 9, by Augustine and Jerome against the Pelagians, and by Ambrose, to whom he ascribed «De vocatione gentium». What he wanted to know was Zwingli's view⁶.

Zwingli used terms such as «elect» in his early works, but he did not develop a doctrine of predestination, nor did he relate predestination to other issues. His references were sometimes little more than a repetition of the biblical text⁷. However his early writings have a strong sense – both personal and theological – of the sovereignty and providence of God. This is expressed in personal terms in «The Plague Song» (with its «Thy vessel am I; To make or break altogether») and his letter to Myconius in July 1520 (with its «I beseech Christ... that he break me as a potter's vessel or make me strong as it pleases him»)⁸. In both of these he is alluding to Romans 9:21. His references are significantly to Romans 9, not Romans 8. (Indeed when he refers to Romans 8 it is usually to verses 31-32 rather than

² See *Gottfried Wilhelm Locher*, *Huldrych Zwingli in neuer Sicht, zehn Beiträge zur Theologie der Zürcher Reformation*, Zürich 1969; engl.: *Zwingli's Thought, New Perspectives*, Leiden 1981. *Alexander Schweizer*, *Die protestantischen Centraldogmen in ihrer Entwicklung innerhalb der reformirten Kirche, 1. Teil, 16. Jahrhundert*, Zürich 1854, and *William Peter Stephens*, *The Theology of Huldrych Zwingli*, Oxford 1986, for discussions of predestination in Zwingli.

³ See *Johann Martin Usteri*, *Initia Zwinglii, Beiträge zur Geschichte der Studien und der Geistesentwicklung Zwinglis in der Zeit vor Beginn der reformatorischen Tätigkeit*, in: *ThStKr* 58, 1885, 607-672; 59, 1886, 95-159 [abbr.: Usteri, Initial] – in particular pp. 114-115, 125-126.

⁴ *Z VI/III* 156, 17-20.

⁵ Usteri, *Initia* 638-652. While in Glarus he annotated Pico della Mirandola «*Liber de providentia dei contra philosophastros*».

⁶ *Z VII* 463, 1-9.

⁷ *Z I* 288, 3-20; *II* 166, 25 – 167, 6.

⁸ *Z I* 67, 23f; *VI/V* 382; *VII* 344, 15-17.

28-30, the text which was so important for Bucer.) He affirmed the sovereignty of God in his repeated use of texts such as John 6:44 and 45. This fits his later comment on the impact of Paul, John, and Augustine on him⁹.

Alongside or within his stress on the sovereignty of God, which informs the whole of the theology, is his understanding of the providence of God. In «An Exposition of the Articles» this doctrine is used to attack any notion of works, merit, or free will. The main discussion is in the exposition of article 20. Zwingli uses Matthew 10:28-31, one of his favourite texts in discussing providence, to show that everything happens because God has ordained it, even the falling of a sparrow to the ground. Then, he argues, if that is the case, how much more are our works ordained by God¹⁰.

In this context Zwingli deals with objections to God's justice if he condemns us for not being good when he has not made us good. He appeals to Romans 9: «Therefore he disposes of his vessels, that is to say us men, as he wills. He chooses (erwellet) one to be fit for his purposes and use; the other he does not will to choose. He can make his creatures whole or break them, as he wills.» Although Zwingli deals with a text that implies election and reprobation, he does not deal with the question of predestination but rather the question of God's sovereignty or providence. Free will is dismissed, for it does not acknowledge God's providence, but ascribes to us what in fact God has done in us¹¹.

Zwingli draws on a range of biblical texts to show that God is the cause of all things, and states that his excursus on providence was to show that it is not we but God who effects what is good in us and that we are simply instruments through whom he works¹².

In «A Commentary» in 1525 Zwingli discusses providence in the sections on God and merit¹³. If in the first he is more concerned with the created world, nevertheless the close relation with free will and merit is manifest. «For the whole business of predestination, free will, and merit rests upon this matter of providence»¹⁴. In the section on merit he continues to wrestle with some of the problems relating to providence, in particular the idea that God may be seen as the author of evil.

⁹ Z V 713, 2 – 714, 2. *Locher* and *Neuser* see this reference as applying to 1520-1521. For *Neuser* they are Zwingli's Reformation teachers, because they taught divine election and sovereignty. See *Wilhelm H. Neuser*, *Die reformatorische Wende bei Zwingli*, Neukirchen-Vluyn 1977, pp. 70-71 and 126-127.

¹⁰ Z II 178, 32 – 179, 20.

¹¹ Z II 179, 20 – 180, 29.

¹² Z II 184, 1 – 186, 20.

¹³ In «A Commentary» Zwingli responds to Erasmus before Luther's «Bondage of the Will». Zwingli's criticism of Erasmus continues in «The Providence of God», Z VI/III 185, 19-20.

¹⁴ Z III 650, 18-19.

For Zwingli «the whole Scripture of the Old Testament views everything as done by the providence of God»¹⁵. He argues for the sovereignty and providence of God on biblical grounds and with biblical support, drawing on a range of texts from the New Testament and the Old. However, these texts are not concerned essentially with predestination, which in any case is seen in the context of providence, which is itself described as «the mother of predestination»¹⁶.

Concern with the sovereignty and providence of God are manifest in «The Providence of God» in 1530. It is an expansion of his sermon at Marburg in 1529. In this much more philosophical discussion of the subject, a discussion which draws heavily on non-biblical writers, predestination is but one chapter. However, some of the problems which are raised by predestination are dealt with here in the context of providence, in which God is seen as the cause of all things in creation and redemption. This view rejects the role of anything creaturely in our salvation, not only the role of works or merit but also that of Word and sacrament, and of course chance. However, in «St Matthew» Zwingli states that belief in providence does not lead to indolence in the elect. The Spirit of God is unceasingly active in them in doing good, for God uses them as instruments to effect his will¹⁷.

It was in 1526 that predestination first had a clear role in Zwingli's theology. In the second part of «Original Sin» he answers the question whether original sin condemns all people to death: «The bliss of everlasting life and the pain of everlasting death are altogether matters of free election or rejection by the divine will». Salvation is not attached to baptism or circumcision, but comes «to those elected of God» before they were born. Christ did not say, «He that is not baptized is damned». Zwingli's concern is to show that salvation comes from election, not from participating in the sacraments¹⁸. For Zwingli, Anabaptists, just as much as papists, think salvation is tied to symbols and do not see the free election of God¹⁹.

«Original Sin» was addressed to Urbanus Rhegius, who wrote to Zwingli on 28 September on the questions of universalism and the necessity of faith for salvation. «We know that no one can be saved unless he is in Christ. We judge that no one can be grafted into Christ without faith»²⁰. In 1523 Zwingli had himself related salvation to faith and, as Urbanus Rhegius did in his letter, had used Hebrews 11:6 and Mark 16:15-16 in a discussion of purgatory to show that those

¹⁵ Z III 649, 1-3; The Latin Works of Huldrych Zwingli, Vol. 3 ed. by *Clarence Nevil Heller*, Philadelphia 1929 (reprinted as *Zwingli, Commentary on True and False Religion*, Durham, NC 1981), p. 68f.

¹⁶ Z III 842, 10.

¹⁷ S VI/I 215, 31 – 216, 2.

¹⁸ Z V 377, 28 – 380, 26; 385, 23-30; The Latin Works of Huldrych Zwingli, Vol. 2 ed. by *William John Hinke*, Philadelphia 1922 (reprinted as *Ulrich Zwingli, On Providence and Other Essays*, Durham, NC 1983) [abbr.: *Latin Works*], pp. 10-12.

¹⁹ Z V 387, 11-13; XIII 106, 32-34.

²⁰ Z VIII 726-727.

who died without faith were condemned²¹. He argues here, however, as he was to argue with the Anabaptists against their stress on faith, that the passages do not apply to children, but only to those who hear the Word. He affirms both the role of Christ and the role of election, for the elect are drawn through Christ alone, but it is only the elect who come to Christ. The difference between adults and children comes out also in the matter of signs of election. Faith (or elsewhere the love and fear of God) is a sign of election, but its absence in children is not a sign that they will be damned²².

Zwingli developed his use of election in his defence of infant baptism in «A Refutation» in 1527, when it seems to have been the Anabaptists rather than Zwingli who introduced the question of election. Against the ascription of salvation to faith, Zwingli points to the fact that election lies behind faith, referring to Romans 8:29-30: «And those whom he predestined he also called; and those whom he called he also justified; and those whom he justified he also glorified». By the use of synecdoche Zwingli argues that attributing salvation to faith is the same as attributing it to election and calling which precede it²³.

The Anabaptist use of Romans 9:11-13, with its reference to Jacob and Esau, Zwingli turned to his advantage by arguing first that only the elect are members of God's people, but the elect include those who, like infants, do not yet believe. A person may be elect, although he does not yet believe. Therefore he argued that the text, «He who does not believe will be condemned», much used by Anabaptists, concerns neither those not old enough to hear nor those to whom the gospel has not been preached. The children of Christian parents are in the covenant of Abraham and that makes us sure of their election, until there is contrary evidence²⁴. Faith is the fruit and evidence of election; yet Zwingli can allow that we make mistakes in our judgment about people's faith, as the apostles did with Simon Magus²⁵.

Zwingli had earlier wrestled with the extent of election and argued that it is not limited to Israel. This is related to God's sovereignty and his election. His action outside Israel, as his speaking through sibyl prophetesses, is intended to allow us to «recognise the liberty of his will and the authority of his election»²⁶. (In a letter to Blarer on 4 May 1528 he was to relate this to God's election, but also to the Spirit's creating not just Palestine but the whole world. He adds that God nourishes godliness among the elect wherever they are²⁷.) God's acting outside his

²¹ Z II 426, 19-25.

²² Z VI/I 156, 11-13; 156, 42 – 157, 3; 162, 8-11; 166, 13-16.

²³ Z VI/I 173, 15 – 174, 28.

²⁴ He argued that «baptism is not at all to be denied infants on account of God's election or reprobation, for neither to Esau nor any other who was rejected was circumcision denied». Z VI/I 184, 2-4; *The Selected Works of Huldrych Zwingli*, ed. by *Samuel Maccauley Jackson*, Philadelphia 1901, reprinted 1972, p. 247 [abbr.: *Selected Works*].

²⁵ Z VI/I 175, 20 – 181, 17.

²⁶ Z VI/I 162, 8-11. *Selected Works* 226-227.

²⁷ Z IX 458, 25 – 459, 4.

people raises the question of the relation of that action to Christ – not that Zwingli intends to sever election from Christ, as the elect are destined to be saved through him. Nevertheless Zwingli can say that election is «above baptism, circumcision, faith, and preaching»²⁸.

In «The Providence of God» Zwingli discusses predestination in chapter 6. He prefers the word election to predestination and places it in God's goodness, which includes his righteousness and mercy. Zwingli adduces Exodus 7:3-4, 9:16, 33:19 and Romans 9:18 to show that election comes from God's will (and is not dependent on his foreseeing how we shall act) and Romans 9:9-12 and 11:6 to show that it has nothing to do with our work or merit²⁹. The discussion raises various questions: the relation of the election of the Gentiles to Christ and to the means of grace, the signs of election, and sin in the elect.

The sense of God's sovereignty and freedom in election is expressed in relation to the Gentiles and to the outward means of Word and sacrament. The freedom of God's election is the basis of God's activity among the Gentiles. (This is also related, as in the early Zwingli, to Paul's words about the Gentiles in Romans 2:14-15³⁰.) This sovereign freedom raises the question of the need for Word and sacrament for those who come to faith. In this context he uses 1 Corinthians 3:6-7 to indicate the limitations of the outward word, which (he says) scripture and daily experience show us, does not bear fruit of itself³¹. In «The Resurrection and Ascension of Christ» he relates salvation and eternal life to election and asserts that God is able to save the Gentiles through Christ even if the outward gospel of Christ is not preached to them³².

In the light of Romans 8:30 Zwingli sees faith and love, or the lack of them, as a sign to us whether or not others are elect. (Nevertheless Zwingli recognised that hypocrites do many outwardly good works without faith, and therefore he denied that faith is present simply because works are present³³.) However as some people do not respond as soon as the gospel is preached, we should pass judgment only on those «who persist in unbelief until death»³⁴. In keeping with «A Refutation», the death of the children of Christian parents is «a sign of divine election», just as faith is in adults³⁵.

However this does not mean that the elect do not sin. They do, but they rise again, as did David, Paul, and Mary Magdalene. However to indulge one's inclina-

²⁸ Z VI/I 184, 6.

²⁹ Z VI/III 150, 6 – 165, 4.

³⁰ Z VI/III 182, 18 – 183, 3.

³¹ Z VI/III 186, 12 – 187, 2.

³² S VI/II 69, 21-36. He accused the Anabaptists of not considering election, but – like the Catholics – of thinking that salvation is bound to symbols, Z V 387, 11-13.

³³ S VI/II 274, 7-12.

³⁴ Z VI/III 179, 4 – 184, 15.

³⁵ Z VI/III 190, 14 – 192, 1.

tions thinking one is safe because one is elect is evidence that one is not elect or that one does not yet have faith or the knowledge of God³⁶.

Yet Zwingli is not fundamentally concerned to show that we can know ourselves or others to be elect because of our or their faith or works, which is the emphasis in *Zeller*³⁷.

In «An Account of the Faith» Zwingli discusses election in the third, fifth, and sixth articles on Christ, redemption, and, the church, and to a certain extent the second article on God. In the third he relates election to Christ and roots it in God's righteousness as well as his goodness. In the tenth article there is a passing, though important, reference to election in connection with the preaching of the Word. Although faith comes from the Spirit alone, it is nevertheless preceded by outward preaching. Zwingli adds that the sending of preachers of the Word to a place is a sign of God's grace, that he wishes to manifest knowledge of himself to his elect³⁸.

In the fifth article he relates the salvation of the children of Gentiles both to the redemption wrought by Christ, the second Adam, which matches the ruin wrought by the first Adam, and to God's free election which precedes faith. He also argues in terms of Christ that the children of Christian parents belong to the church as did the children of Jewish parents in the Old Testament and «that they no less than their parents are of the number of those whom we judge elect»³⁹.

In the sixth article he defines the church as the elect known only to God, but adds that only those who have faith «know that they themselves are elect... but are ignorant about members other than themselves». They know because they have the seal of the Spirit who tells them that God is their Father and they call him Father. He adds that many are elect who have not come to this faith. He also states that the church in the sense of all who are called Christians is sometimes spoken of as elect, even though one cannot know that they are all elect, any more than Peter could when he referred to the elect in 1 Peter 1:1⁴⁰.

In the commentaries there are also references to judging others by the presence or absence of faith or works of love, but usually there is the reservation that we unlike God judge only by appearances⁴¹. However, the context should be noted, and it is often a concern to show that faith or works depend on election and flow from it.

Throughout Zwingli's writings there are references to the church in terms of election or faith, although there are naturally more references to it in terms of election in the later Zwingli, after he had developed his doctrine of election and

³⁶ Z VI/III 217, 8-10; 222, 13 – 223, 14.

³⁷ *Eduard Zeller*, *Das theologische System Zwinglis*, Tübingen 1853, pp. 14-31.

³⁸ Z VI/II 813, 8-16.

³⁹ Z VI/II 800, 9-11; Latin Works II 43.

⁴⁰ Z VI/II 800, 19-35; Latin Works II 43-44.

⁴¹ S VI/I 348, 20-37; 364, 1-10; 385, 6-12; 764, 13-15; VI/II 106, 41-43; 155, 44 – 156, 19; 259, 3-8.

found its usefulness in debate with Catholics and Anabaptists. Yet even in the later Zwingli there are occasions, as in «An Exposition of the Faith», where the church is spoken of first in terms of believers, as it is also spoken of as elect in the early Zwingli⁴².

However the doctrine of election, which strengthens Zwingli's understanding of the church as mixed and as including infants, raises a problem for him in relation to excommunication. He deals with this in «St Matthew» in relation to Matthew 18:18 where God is said to bind what we have bound. Zwingli argues that the church's judgment does not affect election. If the person who is punished by the church is elected, he will repent, and therefore he is not handed over to Satan, as seems to be stated in 1 Corinthians 5:5. Only those who are not elect are handed over to Satan⁴³.

The doctrine of election lies behind the vision of heaven in «An Exposition of the Faith» which so scandalised Luther. It includes Socrates alongside Samuel and Hercules alongside Hezekiah. The vision is not directly related to election, but it would be in keeping with his position that only the elect will enjoy eternal life. They are described in terms of faith or goodness, but that for Zwingli would have been a sign of election, not a condition for it⁴⁴. Indeed Zwingli points out elsewhere of pagans who have done outwardly good works that «their works were not pleasing to God because they lacked faith»⁴⁵.

The only work in which election is particularly prominent is «Questions Concerning the Sacrament of Baptism». Zwingli replies to forty-six questions raised by Schwenckfeld about baptism. He begins by offering a number of propositions which largely concern election and states that they cut all the knots in the whole of religion. Yet the use of election is essentially negative. It is not the basis of Zwingli's case for infant baptism, but a weapon against the Anabaptist linking of baptism and faith in support of believers' baptism. It is election which saves. However, we cannot know who is elect among those enrolled in Christ's service, and the church itself consists of the reprobate as well as the elect⁴⁶.

Predestination has a subordinate role in Zwingli's theology. Even when it is developed from 1526 and is used in controversy, especially with Anabaptists, it is

⁴² Z VI/V 110, 1-9; II 56, 29-30.

⁴³ S VI/I 338, 32 – 341, 15.

⁴⁴ Z VI/V 132, 7-9.

⁴⁵ S VI/I 601, 13-15.

⁴⁶ Z VI/IV 30, 19; 33, 4-5; 34, 17-19. Zwingli makes four points in the eighteenth proposition. First, we cannot know who are elect and who reprobate, therefore the Anabaptists are wrong to drive out from the church the children of Christians, to whom belongs God's promise. Second, those who do not have faith are not thereby damned, for faith follows election, not election faith. Third, if only those who have faith and repent should be baptised, then nobody can be baptised, for we cannot know for certain of people's faith. Fourth, the church includes elect members, both children and adults, and false members, both children and adults, and unbelievers, both those who will one day believe and those who will not (Z VI/IV 38, 9 – 39, 8).

often used to affirm or deny statements which Zwingli has earlier affirmed or denied on some other basis such as faith or God's sovereignty or providence.

Thus providence is used in «An Exposition of the Articles» to deny free will, works, and merit, which are later denied on the grounds of predestination.

There are some matters the early Zwingli relates to faith which he later links to election. For example, signs of faith in the early Zwingli are parallel to signs of election in the later Zwingli. In his early writings Zwingli says that the believer knows that he is drawn by God (John 6:44) if he believes in Christ⁴⁷. In the second disputation he was not prepared to judge who was damned, but left that to God⁴⁸. Yet he also states that you can recognise an unbeliever, as either he does no good work or if he does he ascribes it to himself and not to God. He adds that God wills to make such a person a vessel of wrath⁴⁹. These matters are later related to election.

There is also a parallel to the question of sin in Christians which in his early writings Zwingli discussed in terms of believers and in his later ones in terms of election. In the early Zwingli God protects those who trust in him, so that if they fall they are not harmed by the fall. He gives the examples of David and Peter who were led to repent and reform⁵⁰. This is later related to election and not to faith.

In his early works Zwingli related the living of the new life of love to faith, something which he later related in part to election⁵¹. Furthermore the faith or salvation of the Gentiles which is later related to election, as in «The Providence of God», is earlier set in other contexts, for example in relation to sacrifice (Mal 1:11) and the law of nature (Rom 2:14)⁵².

According to the early Zwingli, in the exposition of the sixty-seventh article, the salvation of the children of Christian parents is not made to depend on baptism⁵³. (This seems to imply doubts about the traditional doctrine of original sin and the relation of baptism to it.) This issue is, however, dealt with explicitly in terms of election in «Original Sin» in 1526.

Moreover some of the theological issues raised by predestination are dealt with in the early Zwingli in relation to the sovereignty or providence of God: the problem of human freedom and that of God's justice in condemning people for things about which they can do nothing.

47 Z I 374, 3-9.

48 Z II 757, 3-18.

49 Z II 180, 30 – 181, 23.

50 Z I 169, 26 – 170, 21.

51 Z I 118, 22-23; III 257, 9-18; VI/III 184, 1 – 187, 18.

52 Z VI/III 182, 18 – 183, 3; III 202, 35 – 204, 15; II 327, 3-13.

53 Z II 455, 18-25.

When one moves from Zwingli to Bucer, one is struck by the difference in the place of predestination in their theology. For Zwingli it is a sub-section of the doctrine of providence, which it never replaces in importance. For Bucer it has an important place in his theology from an early stage. It was developed through the years and expounded systematically in his commentary on Romans, published in 1536. However – in contrast to *Lang's* study of Bucer's doctrine of predestination – we shall concentrate on its origins and early development in the twenties.

Predestination in Bucer was discussed at length by *August Lang* in «Der Evangelienkommentar Martin Butzers und die Grundzüge seiner Theologie»⁵⁴. A third of this book deals directly with what he sees as the fundamental principles of Bucer's theology: the sovereignty of God and election.

For *Lang*, Bucer moves from an assertion of the sovereignty of God in the earlier period to a developed doctrine of election. *Lang* recognises that there are references to the elect and the reprobate in the twenties, but he sees a change in the thirties. He argues that Bucer's earlier references to election and reprobation start not with God's action but with human behaviour. Moreover the terms elect and reprobate indicate two classes of people: saved and lost, believer and unbeliever, godly and ungodly. For *Lang* the terms are ethical rather than religious and dogmatic⁵⁵.

⁵⁴ *August Lang*, *Der Evangelienkommentar Martin Butzers und die Grundzüge seiner Theologie*, Leipzig 1900, Reprint: Aalen 1972, (SGTK II/2) [abbr.: *Lang, Evangelienkommentar*]. Other discussions include Stephens, Holy Spirit, and *Willem van't Spijker*, *Prädestination bei Bucer und Calvin*, in: *Calvinus Theologus*, ed. by W. H. Neuser, Neukirchen-Vluyn 1976, pp. 85-111.

References to Bucer's works not yet published in the modern critical edition are from the sixteenth-century editions. Details of these can be found in: *Bibliographia Bucera*, ed. by *Robert Stupperich*, Gütersloh 1952, (SVRG 169). The following letters are used for references in the footnotes. They are followed by a shortened title and a number in brackets, which correspond to the title and number in *Bibliographia Bucera*.

A: *Apologia...*, 1526 (13)

E: *Epistola D. Pauli ad Ephesios...*, 1527 (17)

EL: *Praelectiones doctiss. in Epistolam D. P. ad Ephesios...*, 1562 (112)

P: *Sacrorum Psalmorum libri quinque ...*, 1532 (25b); first published in 1529

R: *Metaphrasis et enarratio in epist. D. Pauli apostoli ad Romanos...*, 1562 (55a); first published in 1536

TA: *Tomus Anglicanus*, 1577 (115)

ZE: *Tzephaniah...*, 1528 (22).

With the quotations from Bucer's commentaries on the gospels, three page references are given. The first is to the 1527 or 1528 edition, the second to the 1530 edition, and the third to the 1536 edition (14, 20, 28 and 28a in the bibliography).

⁵⁵ See, for example, *Lang, Evangelienkommentar*, pp. 126-127, 156-159, 168-171, 339-340 and 347. On the shift from sovereignty to election: «Es ist, als wollte er, da der eine Pfeiler seines Lehrgebäudes ins Wanken gerät, den anderen um so kräftiger stützen, um so das Ganze im Gleichgewicht zu erhalten» (p. 340).

The change, seen in the commentary on Romans in 1536, shows Bucer engaging systematically and theologically with the issues involved in the doctrine of election, in particular in relation to the doctrine of God. In this later stage election is linked with a positive view of the means which God uses (Word and sacrament). *Lang* contrasts this with an earlier emphasis on the sovereignty of God in the Spirit, in which moreover the Spirit is not related to the means of grace and is not really thought of religiously⁵⁶.

Lang's discussion of election, though extensive, is not comprehensive. It rests largely on the commentaries, especially the three editions of the commentary on the gospels and the commentary on Romans, with some references to the commentary on Ephesians. He offers an explanation more ingenious than convincing for any reference in the later works of Bucer which he has omitted and which might not fit his interpretation⁵⁷. However, it is the omissions in and interpretations of the early Bucer which most distort *Lang's* presentation. A particularly important omission is Bucer's reply to Treger in 1524, which – with other writings – suggests a different view from *Lang's* of the place of predestination in Bucer and in particular shows some of the differences between him and Zwingli.

First, however, we may note a use of predestination which is common to Zwingli and Bucer and the other reformers. It is used negatively to deny that works play any part in our salvation and positively to affirm that our salvation depends wholly on God's free election. This is one role of predestination in Bucer, not least in opposition to Catholic and Anabaptist opponents. Thus, for example, he states in «St Matthew» that God's election of his sons is «from the foundation of the world, before they had done good or evil»⁵⁸. According to «Ephesians», election means that «everything depends on the free election of God» and not on merit or free will or anything else⁵⁹.

Yet this view is not the only important emphasis in Bucer. There are two main emphases which relate to the crucial role of Romans 8:28-30 in his theology. The text has a restrictive and a forward reference. It is restrictive in that only those who are predestined will be called or justified or glorified, but it also has a forward reference in that all those who are predestined will also be called, justified, and glorified. The first of these affects Bucer's understanding of Word and sacrament, and excludes the possibility that they can be the automatic bearers of the Spirit and grace of God to all who receive them. The second implies a necessary link between things which are often separated, such as faith and love, imputed righteousness and real righteousness, the new birth and the new life.

⁵⁶ «In jedem Falle aber, wo es wirklich geschieht, ist der Geist nicht mehr ein rein religiöser Begriff, sondern nach Art einer physischen Kategorie gedacht» (ibid. 127).

⁵⁷ Ibid. 371-372.

⁵⁸ 204.A.24-B.5; 67.A.14-18; 169.B.22-170.C.2.

⁵⁹ E 39.A.3-12.

There are references to predestination in Bucer's earliest writings, when he speaks of the elect and the reprobate and also of vessels of wrath (Rom 9:21)⁶⁰. However the first significant use of predestination occurred in 1524. The context was the controversy with Treger, an Augustinian who was later to appear at the Berne disputation. Treger argued on the basis of Galatians 3 that all who are baptised have put on Christ. This position Bucer rejected by reference to Romans 8. It is notable that he refers to Romans 8:28-30, a passage which was to be especially important in shaping his understanding of predestination and which in many ways distinguishes his approach from Zwingli's.

Bucer argued that Galatians 3 applies to those who believe in Christ, saying that «not all those baptised can be meant, but only those called according to God's purpose, foreknown and foreordained, to be conformed to the image of his Son.... For he speaks of the baptism in which one puts on Christ, is Christ's, and abides in him.... That is what the baptism of Christ does, for he baptises in Spirit and fire and not in water alone, like John the Baptist. Those who receive only the sacrament of baptism, and yet are foreknown to be damned, are not inwardly baptised in the Spirit by Christ, for they will not be glorified and therefore they are not justified by Christ»⁶¹. There is here a distinction, but not necessarily a separation between baptism in water and baptism in the Spirit. The reprobate receive only the former, the elect the latter as well.

The same distinction is made in the «Grund und Ursach», where Bucer challenges the belief that baptism in itself saves a child and that without it he will not see God's face. Bucer contrasts baptism by the Spirit with water baptism, but he does not separate them. Baptism can be said to be effective for those who believe in one place and for the elect in another⁶². «For the forgiveness of sins is the baptism of Christ, which he works in the elect through his Holy Spirit». However it is not the outward baptism which saves. «The Lord certainly says, <He who believes and is baptised will be saved, but he who does not believe will be damned>. But he does not say, <He who is not baptised will be damned>. For God does not bind his grace to water»⁶³.

God does not bind his grace to water in the sense that he must give his grace to everyone with it and does not give it to anyone apart from it. For Bucer the water of baptism is nothing in itself. It is an instrument or vehicle of the Spirit only when the Spirit uses it. For Bucer, however, with infants as well as with adults the condition of its effectiveness is election. In arguing for infant baptism on the basis of God's care for us from our mother's womb he says: «Even if we baptise a few goats [that is, those who are not sheep and therefore not elect],

⁶⁰ Martini Buceri opera omnia, Series 1: Deutsche Schriften, ed. by Robert Stupperich, Vols. 1ff, Paris and Gütersloh 1960ff [abbr.: BDS], Vol. 1, 50, 25-29; 105, 29-31; 109, 28-31 and 96, 22.

⁶¹ BDS 2, 119, 26 – 120, 4.

⁶² BDS 1, 255, 13-20; 257, 4-6.

⁶³ BDS 1, 257, 25-31.

whom Christ does not will to baptise with his Spirit, it is only a matter of so much water and prayer. Likewise the apostles did not always succeed in baptising only believers»⁶⁴.

This positive (or relatively positive) linking of baptism and election persists in the commentaries in the twenties. Thus in «St Matthew» he states that the ascription of saving power to baptism, which is «a work of man», is a denial of justification by faith⁶⁵. Nevertheless in the situations for which God has appointed baptism he baptises with the Spirit – that is with those who are elect and those who have faith⁶⁶.

Bucer rejects the Lutheran view that infants can have faith as that would involve hearing the gospel and being persuaded of it. But he holds that if they are elect they will have the Holy Spirit, just as John the Baptist did, who was full of the Holy Spirit from his infancy. At the appointed time they will be led to faith in the Word of God⁶⁷.

In the twenties Bucer's main concern was the Catholic (and according to Bucer's understanding of it, the Lutheran) error of making the sacrament an automatic instrument of the Spirit⁶⁸. In «Getrewe Warnung» he attacks the view «that it cleanses children from all sins... that, as soon as one baptises them, Christ imparts to them his Spirit... or that by virtue of the word <I baptise thee etc>, the Holy Spirit comes into the water and is communicated to the baptised children...»⁶⁹. Bucer gives various reasons for rejecting this view, among which is that it ignores the doctrine of election. Thus he relates the effectiveness of baptism to election and does not sharply separate, although he distinguishes, the sign and what it signifies.

The way Bucer relates predestination to baptism is similar to the way he relates it to the Word and the eucharist. Like Zwingli he has a strong sense of the sovereignty of God and the need for people to be taught of God. In his sovereignty God does not need outward means, but for Bucer that does not mean that he does not use them. In «Grund und Ursach» Bucer states «Christ can convert whom he will, without my preaching, but he wishes to use my ministry in doing so, as well with deeds as with words»⁷⁰. So it was with Cornelius and Paul: «the former had to be subject to Peter, the latter to Ananias, as teacher»⁷¹. Yet this use of a pre-

⁶⁴ BDS 1, 260, 34-39.

⁶⁵ 51.A.15-26; 17.B.13-19; 41.A.3-14.

⁶⁶ 56.A.1-27; 18.C.32-D.16; 42.D.19.

⁶⁷ 235.B.8-12; 156.A.13-16; 404.C.26-D.3.

⁶⁸ There is a more positive emphasis in the later Bucer which can be seen in the use of analogy and biblical texts. In «Apologia» of 1526 he rejects the idea that baptism is an instrument of salvation, like herbs for the body (A 12.B.7-14). But in «De vi et usu» he compares the sacraments with effective remedies for sickness (TA 598.11-25). In the twenties Bucer stresses in 1 Corinthians 3 that it is God who gives the increase, in the thirties that it is to what we plant and water that God gives the increase.

⁶⁹ BDS 2, 241, 6-12.

⁷⁰ BDS 1, 223, 13-15.

⁷¹ 50.B.25-51.A.5; 17.B.2-6; 40.C.11-16.

cher or teacher does not deny the fact, as the example of the Magi shows, that God knows his own (that is, the elect) and «can teach them about himself, even without outward preaching»⁷².

There is, however, in «St Matthew» a clearer association of the inward teaching of the Holy Spirit with the doctrine of election. «For in the case of adults it is necessary that the gospel be preached first, after which, if they are among the sheep [that is, the elect], they are given the Spirit, so that they have faith in the gospel...»⁷³.

In «Ephesians» there is a greater stress on the view that the Word is not an automatic vehicle of the Spirit⁷⁴. However, in his controversy with the Anabaptists, he describes those who attack the public preaching of the Word as led by an evil spirit precisely because it is by the preaching of the Word that the elect are led to faith in Christ⁷⁵. Indeed God may be said to penetrate the hearts of the elect through his Word, of which he persuades them by his Spirit⁷⁶.

The Spirit is also said to be at work in the elect before the Word is preached, both positively and negatively. Negatively, he makes them weary and heavy laden, without rest or peace, because they do not please God. They come to the Lord when he calls them⁷⁷. The Spirit's work can also be expressed positively. «His principal work, in fact, is to make us inquisitive about and understanding of divine things, which the natural man neither cares about nor is able to receive. The result is that we thirst for the Word of God, and that, when we have heard it, we receive it...»⁷⁸.

Bucer repudiates Luther's view that the Spirit comes only through Word and sacrament by reference to the examples of Paul and Cornelius, John the Baptist and the Ethiopian eunuch. The Spirit is «the seed of God, of whom the elect are never destitute, since indeed they are separated from their mother's womb, as Paul also was». By contrast, the Word is preached to the reprobate so that they may be blinded⁷⁹.

Bucer's conviction that only the elect receive applies to the eucharist as to baptism. In 1526 he states in «Apologia» that the Spirit is sent to the elect and that where he is present people eat and drink to eternal life⁸⁰. By contrast, the impious

⁷² 23.A.1-5; 8.C.23-25; 39.B.11-14.

⁷³ 51.B.16-20; 17.C.3-5; 41.A.25-B.3. Compare 22.B.17-23; 8.C.17-20; 19.B.5-8.

⁷⁴ E 6.A.6-18. He rejects not only the view that God must work through the sacraments but also the view that he cannot act apart from them. «Baptism with water is not in itself necessary for salvation, so that no one can be saved without it» (72.B.22-26; 25.A.3-5; 622.D.10-13).

⁷⁵ E 37.A.15-27.

⁷⁶ E 20.B.20-25.

⁷⁷ BDS 2, 285, 16 – 286, 7.

⁷⁸ 79.B.5-10; 26.C.6-9; 63.A.21-25.

⁷⁹ 139.B.3-27; 50.A.12-27; 682.C.3. This is dropped in 1536. In «Romans» there is a clearer sense of the Spirit's working alongside the Word, rather than before the Word.

⁸⁰ He also links receiving «the body of Christ with the bread» to faith (A 19.B.26-20.A.1).

(that is, the reprobate) cannot eat the body of Christ, because «Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me and I in him, and he has eternal life»⁸¹. This statement foreshadows his eventual agreement with the Lutherans, where he distinguishes the impious from the unworthy. The former are reprobate and cannot receive Christ's body, the latter can as they are elect. The unworthy include those who have different degrees of faith and those who for a period lapse.

The way Bucer uses Romans 8:28-30 in «Against Treger» has a forward reference, as well as a restrictive one. It is not just that people's justification and glorification depend on their election⁸². Their election also leads to their «being conformed» to the image of Christ, for that is the purpose of their election⁸³. The elect may fall, yet they never fall from the gracious hand of God, but are led by him to attain the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ⁸⁴.

In «Ephesians» there is a clear sequence, but it is a logical rather than a chronological one. «But the order is as follows. First, God's election or predestination. Next, adoption as sons, which is also called vocation, since the Lord draws to himself those to whom he has given his Spirit, and gives them knowledge of himself for which he has destined them from eternity. Then in the third place comes holiness of life and the duties of love, by which good works are produced. When men see them, they glorify the heavenly Father, from whose goodness they proceed. So that, fourthly, there is in the saints the glory of God, resulting from the righteousness, with which God has deigned to adorn them»⁸⁵.

The various elements (vocation, justification, and glorification as well as sanctification, which is not explicit in Romans 8:28-30) are emphasised in different ways at different times. At times vocation and justification are stressed. «Therefore, whomever God has foreordained to eternal life, he calls in his time, and gives him to believe his Word. Romans 8:30 and Acts 13:48»⁸⁶. For «God sends those who announce the gospel», and then «the Spirit persuades the hearts of the elect» «at the time God has appointed for them»⁸⁷.

Vocation may be distinguished logically, if not chronologically, from justification and sanctification, but it is inseparably bound up with them. This is evident in the variety of names by which it is called, such as adoption⁸⁸ or conversion or grafting into Christ⁸⁹.

⁸¹ A 20.A.27-B.2.

⁸² BDS 2, 120, 1-11.

⁸³ BDS 2, 120, 12-18.

⁸⁴ BDS 2, 160, 30-33. In «St Matthew» Bucer makes it clear that the elect will not only come to faith but will also persevere in faith and «never be alienated from him» (204.A.24-B.12; 67.A.14-22; 169.B.22-170.C.7).

⁸⁵ E 26.B.16-25. In «St John» Bucer uses the phrase order of salvation (239.A.18-23; 88.D.23-25; 771.B.9-11).

⁸⁶ BDS 2, 239, 11-13.

⁸⁷ 24.A.16-26, 235.B.7-12; 88.D.22-28, 156.D.13-16; 224.D.6-12, 404.C.25-D.4.

⁸⁸ E 26.B.16-20.

⁸⁹ R 407.C.16-18.

Vocation, justification, and sanctification are related to outward means, for it is through the preaching of the Word that the elect are called. «There is, therefore, need here of the inspiration of the Holy Spirit to persuade the hearts of the elect of the gospel. In this way as many as are foreordained to eternal life are at length called and drawn by the Father to the Son. And this is that hearing from which faith proceeds (Roman 10)... Thus, after the election of the saints, the next thing is that God penetrates the hearts of his own by the Word, of which however he persuades them by his Spirit. From this persuasion and the certain faith which they already have in his words, there follow trust in him, love for him, and a will ready to please him in all things»⁹⁰.

Emphasis on the life of the Christian or sanctification is expressed in a variety of ways which are related directly or indirectly to election. In his earliest work Bucer said that Christians are created for good works as a bird for flying or a fish for swimming⁹¹. «For our salvation is nothing other than being conformed to Christ, that is, our entire selves given in love to our neighbours»⁹². «For those elect to this from all eternity, whom this renewing power of God inspires, he so renews, so transforms, so makes them despise carnal things and admire things celestial, so strips away their self-love and fires them with love of their neighbour, that they are a source of wonder to men of this age...»⁹³. The same emphasis is present to the end in the lectures on Ephesians in 1551. «The final causes [of election] are the sanctification of life and the glory of God. For it is not the sanctification of our life that is the chief purpose of our election, but the very glory of God. It is on account of this and for this that all things were created and that we have been regenerated»⁹⁴.

In Zwingli election was not spoken of, at least initially, as leading to vocation, justification, sanctification, and glorification. Later it was spoken of as prior to faith and sanctification, though even then it was not expressed as systematically as by Bucer with his sense of the order of salvation.

Like Zwingli, Bucer was concerned with signs of election. It was also a matter which arose in his first major discussion of predestination in «Against Treger». Treger argued that the church was the baptised. Bucer, by contrast, defined the church in terms of the elect. This led naturally to the question whether one can distinguish the elect from the reprobate.

Bucer indicated the difficulty. He pointed out that Peter denied Christ and appeared to human judgement not to be a Christian⁹⁵. In «St Matthew», however, he spoke of a distinction between the elect and reprobate even before they respond to the gospel. The reason for this is that there is always «some seed of God in the

⁹⁰ E 20 B.4-25.

⁹¹ BDS 1, 66, 8-12.

⁹² ZE 75.A.3-11.

⁹³ 70.B.18-26; 24.A.15-21; 620.C.24-D.7.

⁹⁴ EL 19.C.10-13.

⁹⁵ BDS 2, 114, 39 – 115, 3.

elect». Hence there is «a zeal for the truth, even at a time when they attack the truth, or are leading a life which undoubtedly conflicts with it. Thus Paul devoted himself to the traditions of his fathers more than his contemporaries did»⁹⁶.

In «Ephesians» the sin against the Holy Spirit is regarded as a clear sign of the reprobate, but the example of the penitent thief is seen as a warning against rejecting anyone not committing this sin⁹⁷. Indeed it is by the gift of the Holy Spirit that the elect and regenerate are distinguished, as the elect have the seed of God, that is, the Holy Spirit. From this come a repugnance to evil and an impulse to good⁹⁸. The elect can be recognised by the fruit of the Spirit. The reprobate follow the affections of the flesh, whereas the elect wage war against the flesh, and when they do evil, detest it⁹⁹.

In «St John» the distinction between elect and reprobate is more directly theological: it is related to the divinity of Christ¹⁰⁰ or the ability to see the Holy Spirit¹⁰¹. However the gifts of the Spirit, unlike the fruit of the Spirit, are not a sign of election. Thus Saul had the gift of ruling and Judas the gift of casting out demons, but they lacked the Spirit of piety¹⁰². In «Psalms» Bucer stresses that we cannot tell who is elect or reprobate. Some who seem bad here will later be seen to be good¹⁰³. It is God alone who decides. He knows, whereas we can judge wrongly as, for example, David's sons did, after what Nathan had said¹⁰⁴.

Bucer's discussion of signs of predestination is largely limited to the commentaries, where he expounds the text of scripture. It reflects in some ways the diverse testimony of scripture. The Holy Spirit is for him the mark of the elect, not however by his gifts which the reprobate share, but by his fruit. The fruit may be discerned in some measure in the elect before they believe, though this view seems limited to the early commentaries. The only clear mark of the reprobate is the sin against the Holy Spirit. Although they may sometimes seem to embrace the truth, their lives are never transformed, because they lack the Holy Spirit¹⁰⁵.

From the beginning Bucer accepts that the elect sin. In «Against Treger» he speaks of God's allowing this, so that they do not become proud¹⁰⁶. However because they are elect, they cannot fall, but can err only for a time, «for the gifts and calling of God are irrevocable»¹⁰⁷. He later distinguishes between sin in the elect

⁹⁶ 131.A.23-B.4; 122.B.10-15; 308.D.24-309.A.4.

⁹⁷ E 35.A.15-B.1.

⁹⁸ E 39.A.3-12.

⁹⁹ E 39.B.8-20; 40.A.19-B.5. Bucer often refers to Matthew 5:16, which affirms that people will see the good the disciples do, and will glorify God (138.B.20-139.A.3; 45.B.11-16; 11.A.21-B.2). Compare E 36.B.19-23.

¹⁰⁰ 178.B.24-26; 65.B.2-3; 715.B.14-15.

¹⁰¹ 219.A.6-12; 80.B.3-6; 751.A.13-16.

¹⁰² 205.B.24-206.A.11; 75.D.21-76.A.3; 740.C.5-17.

¹⁰³ P 3.B.23-26.

¹⁰⁴ P 27.A.18-26.

¹⁰⁵ 131.B.7-23; 122.B.17-C.8; 309.A.7-B.5.

¹⁰⁶ BDS 2.162.30-34.

¹⁰⁷ BDS 2.107.5-10,35-38.

and sin in the reprobate. In «St Matthew», Bucer could even say that if Paul had persisted in his sin after his experience on the Damascus road, he would have been guilty of the sin against the Holy Spirit. But he could not so, because he was elect¹⁰⁸.

3.

Both Zwingli and Bucer stressed the sovereignty of God, but one important difference between them lies in the place of predestination within their theology and their use of Romans 8:28-30 in expressing predestination. These lead to a stronger role in Bucer than in Zwingli for Word and sacrament and a clearer sense of the order of salvation (and with that a stronger emphasis on sanctification). In Zwingli predestination is used negatively to deny the role of the sacraments in salvation rather than positively to limit their effectiveness to the elect. Zwingli also seems to use predestination relatively more than Bucer against Anabaptists in support of the baptism of infants on the basis of election (over against the Anabaptist insistence on faith). Bucer seems to use it more often against Catholics. Zwingli prefers the term election and his stress is on election rather than reprobation. With Bucer the accent is more on election than reprobation, but he engages with reprobation more than Zwingli.

Both speak of signs of election, though Bucer is more cautious and keeps closer to the biblical text. They both believe people can be recognised by their fruit, but Bucer is more consistent in qualifying this, with examples such as that of the penitent thief. In Bucer there is a stress on the seed of election, that is the presence of the Holy Spirit in the elect. This leads him to discuss the role of the Spirit in the elect before they hear the Word. Later his emphasis is rather on the work of the Spirit with the Word.

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¹⁰⁸ 128.B.5-23; 121.B.28-C.9; 306.D.16-307.A.3.