

Thus the supralapsarian view is caught on the horns of a serious dilemma.

However, there are certain other considerations which should be noted. The supralapsarian view holds that God first decrees the salvation of some men and the perdition of others. However, unless salvation can be related to an actual fall into sin (not merely a possible fall), it is difficult to relate this decree to the scriptural conception of salvation from sin and its results. The same problem arises with the concept of perdition, which in scripture is constantly connected directly with sin and its fruits. If the entrance of sin into the world is not yet decreed, how is it possible to speak meaningfully of salvation or perdition unless these classes of persons are predestined to heaven or to hell purely on the basis of God's selection, without regard to sin? In such a case, both those elected to salvation and those reprobated to perdition would be selected without regard to their deserts; neither class would deserve their eternal destiny, for both would be predestined gratuitously. Those elected to heaven would not deserve it, since it would not be a selection by grace but a sovereign expression of God's choice. On the other hand, those reprobated to hell would not deserve it either, since it would not be a condemnation based on God's justice but once again a sovereign expression of God's choice.

Four other problems in the supralapsarian view should be briefly mentioned. The first of these has to do with the scriptural representations of the proximate end, to which the elect are chosen. The Scriptures say that the elect are chosen to holiness and to the sprinkling of the blood of Christ (Eph. 1:4; 1. Pet. 1:2). This presupposes the sinfulness of the elect and their need of cleansing from the defilement and guilt of sin. The electing decree appears, therefore, to view the elect as fallen; that is, to assume the decree to permit the fall as prior.

The second problem has to do with the placement of the Redeemer in this scheme. If He is connected with election in the very first decree (that is, if the elect are "chosen in Him before the foundation of the world" [Eph. 1:41]), then the persons elected must be viewed as already sinful and in need of redemption. This assumes the decree to permit the fall as prior to the electing decree. But the view then becomes infralapsarian. If on the other hand the Redeemer appears in the decree following the fall, then the purpose of God to save some men and the purpose of God to provide a Redeemer for them are separated by other purposes (viz., the purpose to create and the purpose to permit the fall), then the unity of the scheme seems to be greatly compromised. In fact, the provision of a Redeemer for God's elect then seems almost to be an afterthought.

The third problem has to do with the claim made by supralapsarianism that God, even in the decree to create and permit the fall, had His eye fixed on His elect individually and personally, so that there was not a single moment in the divine purpose when they did not stand in a special relation to God as His beloved ones. This claim sounds at once so warm and comforting and so evangelical (i.e., it seems to make the soul dependent for its salvation directly on God alone, with no intermediaries), that it tends to make the hearers say,