

"Amen!" in an emotional response, the meanwhile forgetting the necessity of bringing the critical faculty to bear upon this view (as upon every view). The problem with this comforting claim may be stated by asking the question: How can elect individuals stand in a special relation to God as His beloved ones (i.e., as objects of His special, gracious love) if God has not yet decided (decreed) to create them (bring them into being)? If He has not yet decreed to create them, then they are yet nonentities. Are these nonentities the objects of God's special, selective, gracious love? Are these nonexistent beings (non-existent in God's purpose, not in objective reality) His beloved ones? And how can these nonentities (we cannot even speak of them as human beings until we know that God has decreed to create human beings) stand in a special saving relationship to God? Once again this points up the impossibility of speaking of God's electing some definite men to salvation without presupposing God's creation of those men and His permission of their fall.

The fourth problem has to do with the relationship of the decrees respecting the creation and the fall to the predestinating decree. Supralapsarianism appears to make the decrees of creation and the fall subordinate to the predestinating decree, as means to the accomplishment of that end. As a result, creation appears to lose any independent significance as a mighty manifestation of God's glory, and appears to become merely a means to the end of securing God's glory in the eternal salvation of the elect and the eternal perdition of the nonelect. Also as a result the fall appears to lose independent significance as a genuine element of disturbance of creation, and appears to become merely an element of progress toward the end of securing God's glory in the eternal salvation of the elect and the eternal perdition of the nonelect. And if sin is a necessary element of progress then the question of God's justice in condemning the nonelect to eternal perdition must be faced -- not justice defined in terms of God's sovereignty, in terms of which God can theoretically be said always to act justly in whatever He does, but justice in terms of His attribute of justice as that attribute is defined in Scripture, where -- for example -- God is said to be just and righteous who tries the hearts and minds of the wicked and the righteous (Ps. 7:9); where He warns men not to kill the innocent or the righteous, for He will not acquit the guilty (Exod. 23:7); where God says that both he who justifies the wicked and he who condemns the righteous is an abomination to the Lord (Prov. 17:15); where we are told that if we confess our sins, God is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:9); and where Christ is said to have been publicly displayed as a propitiation (a satisfaction of God's justice) through His blood, in order that God might demonstrate His righteousness both at that time and in view of His passing over sins in past times, in order that God might at the same time be just and the one who declares righteous the one who does not seek to fulfill the Law in himself but simply receives by faith the perfect righteousness of Christ (Rom. 3:25-26). This conception of God's justice is quite different from one which says, "Since God is totally sovereign, whatever He does is right simply because He does it" (i.e., by definition!). This conception of God's justice says, "Since God is completely righteous, whatever He does is right because He always acts in accordance with His nature" (this does not allow