

supra- and infra-lapsarian orders. In addition, sublapsarianism begins with a universal reference of the redemptive decree, and ends with a particular reference of that decree. In this respect also, sublapsarianism agrees with Amyraldianism, and differs from supra- and infra-lapsarianism. Still further, sublapsarianism makes fulfillment of the ultimate condition for the application of redemption to rest upon fallen men, and must therefore insert the establishing of that condition by God between the redemptive decree and the electing decree. In this respect sublapsarianism differs from all three of the other orders of the decrees which we have been discussing. Still further, sublapsarianism makes necessary some mitigation of the effects of the fall, especially as those effects pertain to the understanding and the will of fallen men, in terms of some form of preparatory or assisting grace sufficient to enable an unregenerate man to respond favorably to the gospel; and must therefore insert the provision for the bestowal of such grace between the establishing of the condition for the application of redemption and the electing decree. That is, God having established repentance and faith as the condition of salvation, He must then enable fallen men to initially respond to that condition. Then those who are foreseen to fulfill that condition may be elected. In this respect also, sublapsarianism differs from all of the other views we have been discussing. And still further, sublapsarianism makes the electing decree dependent upon fallen men's foreseen favorable response to the gospel. In this respect sublapsarianism stands alone among these other views of the order of the decrees.

(2) Critique of the view

First of all, there is in this view a tension between a universal intention of redemption, and a particular application of redemption. This tension is relieved by seeing God as respecting the freedom of man's will, so that the reason that God's original intention is not fully realized is not because of some conflict or difficulty in Him, but in man's resistance to His grace. Thus the blameworthiness for a partial failure of God's intention is placed upon sinful men.

With this in mind, the view places a heavy emphasis upon fallen men's response to God's call through the gospel as determinative of the outworking and success of God's plan of salvation. In principle all men are free to reject the gospel and perish, in which case God would be unable to do anything about it (unless He introduced an alternative plan which would not depend upon human response). However, what could happen in principle does not happen in experience, and so God's plan is seen as workable and at least partially successful. In this heavy emphasis upon the decisive nature of man's response, the reason why God can expect to realize some success through His electing decree is that His attribute of omniscience enables Him to foresee the free, uncoerced response which fallen men will make to the gospel, thereby enabling Him to elect them to salvation.

In itself, the concept that God can foreknow completely free actions (that is, actions which are not the result of any efficiency exerted by Him in a particular direction) is sound: God foreknew the perfectly free action of Adam and Eve in their fall from original righteousness. Thus the concept is not in itself the problem.