

Supralapsarianism and Infralapsarianism

Herman Bavinck

Born on December 13, 1854, in Hoogeveen, Drenthe, Holland, Herman Bavinck was the son of the Reverend Jan Bavinck, a leading figure in the secession from the State Church of the Netherlands in 1834. After theological study in Kampen, and at the University of Leiden, he graduated in 1880, and served as the minister of the congregation at Franeker, Friesland, for a year. According to his biographers, large crowds gathered to hear his outstanding exposition of the Scriptures.

In 1882, he was appointed a Professor of theology at Kampen, and taught there from 1883 until his appointment, in 1902, to the chair of systematic Theology in the Free University of Amsterdam, where he succeeded the great Abraham Kuyper, then recently appointed Prime Minister of the Netherlands. In this capacity — an appointment he had twice before declined — Bavinck served until his death in 1921.

C. The supralapsarian and infralapsarian interpretation of the decree:

(1) Points of agreement. Both agree:

- (a) That God is not the Author of sin (supra as well as infra).
- (b) That Scripture (not philosophy) is the only source of our knowledge of God's decree (supra as well as infra).
- (c) That man's fall and punishment is not merely the object of God's foreknowledge but of his decree and foreordination (infra as well as supra).
- (d) That faith is not the cause of the decree of election, neither sin the cause of the decree of reprobation (infra as well as supra).

(2) Points of disagreement:

- (a) In general, supralapsarianism places the decree of predestination proper above (supra) the decree to permit the

fall (lapsus); while infralapsarianism places the decree of predestination proper below (infra) the decree to permit the fall (lapsus). Hence:

Supralapsarianism:

predestination
fall

Infralapsarianism:

fall
predestination

(b) From this general differentiation it becomes clear that supra and infra differ in regard to their presentation of the order in the elements of God's plan. The logical order according to supra:

1. a decree determining the purpose of all things, namely, the revelation of God's virtues; specifically, the revelation of his mercy in the salvation of a definite number of possible men; and the revelation of his justice in the perdition of another definite number of possible men
2. a decree to create the men thus elected and reprobated.
3. a decree to permit them to fall.
4. a decree to provide a Mediator for the elect and through him to justify them, and to condemn the reprobate.

The logical order according to infra:

1. a decree to create man in holiness and blessedness.
2. a decree to permit man to fall.
3. a decree to elect some out of this fallen multitude and to leave others in their misery.
4. a decree to bring about the salvation of the elect through Christ. See II, F.

(c) From this again it is apparent that according to supra men viewed as possible or creatable and fallible are the objects of the decree; while, according to infra men viewed as fallen are objects of the decree.

(3) Objections:

(a) To infra:

1. God's justice does not explain the decree of reprobation. The ultimate ground of reprobation is God's sovereign will.
2. In order to maintain reprobation as an act of God's JUSTICE infra places reprobation after the FALL as if in the decree of reprobation God figured only with ORIGINAL sin and not also with ACTUAL sins.

(b) To supra:

1. Supra is correct when it maintains that God's glory is the final goal of all God's works, but the manner in which that goal will be realized is not thereby given; it is incorrect to say that in the eternal perdition of the reprobate God reveals his justice only and that in the eternal salvation of the elect he reveals his mercy exclusively.
2. According to supra the decree of predestination has for its object possible men and a possible Redeemer; but just how are we to conceive of a decree concerning possible men whose actual future existence has not even been determined?
3. Supra makes the damnation of the reprobate the object of the divine will IN THE SAME SENSE as the salvation of the elect. This position is not sustained by Scripture.

(c) To both infra and supra:

1. It is incorrect to define the final goal of all things as the revelation of God's mercy in the elect and of his justice in the reprobate.
2. It is incorrect to represent the lost condition of the reprobate in hell as an object of predestination.
3. Predestination unto eternal death should not be coordinated with predestination unto eternal life, for while certain Individuals constitute the object of reprobation, the human race under a new Head, even Christ, is the object of election.
4. Both supra and infra err when they regard the various elements of God's counsel as subordinately related to each other.

5. Both are one-sided: supra emphasizing God's sovereignty; Infra, God's righteousness, holiness, and mercy.

(4) The author's conclusion in regard to the whole matter: "God's decree should not be exclusively described . . . as a straight line to indicate a relation merely of before and after, cause and effect, means and goal; but it should also be viewed as a system the several elements of which are coordinately related to one another. . . . As in an organism all the members are dependent upon one another and in a reciprocal manner determine one another, so also the universe is God's work of art, the several parts of which are organically related."

The word "predestination," has been used in more than one sense: it has been given a broad and a narrow meaning. According to Pelagianism it is merely the decree whereby God, on the ground of foreseen faith and perseverance on the part of some, and foreseen sin and unbelief on the part of others, has determined to give to the former eternal salvation and to the latter eternal punishment. According to this conception, creation, the fall, Christ, the proclamation of the Gospel and the offering of grace to all, persevering faith and unbelief precede predestination and are not included in it but excluded from it; the decree of predestination is no more than the assignment to eternal life or eternal punishment. In this way the most restricted meaning is given to the word predestination, which is then made entirely dependent upon "the bare foreknowledge of God," is a matter of uncertainty, and is not worthy of the name predestination. In that case not God but man is the maker of history and the arbiter of its destiny. This error has been sufficiently refuted in the former paragraph. The important difference between infra- and supralapsarianism, however, must be given more detailed discussion. At bottom this difference consists in a broader or a more restricted definition of the concept "predestination." Augustine accepted a twofold restriction of this concept: in his system the decree of predestination follows that concerning creation and the fall, and he generally used the term "predestination" in the favorable sense, as a synonym for "election," while he gave the preference to the term "foreknowledge" to indicate reprobation: predestination, then, is what *God* does, namely that which is good; while "foreknowledge" refers to what *man* does, namely evil. In general, scholasticism, Roman Catholicism, and Lutheranism, accepted this interpretation of the term predestination. Also in the writings of Reformed infralapsarian theologians the decree of creation and of the fall precedes that of election and of reprobation; but while most of them were willing to look upon reprobation as a part of predestination — just so the decree of predestination follows that of the fall — and to speak of a twin or double predestination, others considered it better to conceive of predestination as a synonym for election, and to discuss reprobation separately and under a different name. Now, if the term "foreknowledge" is not used in a Pelagian sense, and if the decree of reprobation

is not withdrawn from the province of the will of God, as was done by later Roman Catholic and Lutheran theologians, the difference is not essential but merely verbal. But it is characteristic of infralapsarianism that, in the decree, creation and the fall precede election and reprobation; while supralapsarianism's concept of predestination is broad enough to include creation and the fall, which are then looked upon as means to an end: the eternal destiny of rational creatures. In the Reformed Church and in Reformed theology equal recognition has always been given to both supra- and infralapsarianism, viewed as interpretations of the decree of predestination. To be sure, the Dutch confessional standards are infralapsarian; nevertheless, no ecclesiastical assembly, not even the Synod of Dort, has ever troubled the supralapsarians.

The Lambeth articles of Confession, purposely leave the question unanswered. Reformed theologians have always granted charter privileges to both conceptions. Spanheim used to say that in the cathedra he was supra, but when he was teaching his congregation he was infra. On the one hand, supralapsarians as well as infralapsarians teach that God is not the Author of sin, but that the cause of sin lies in the will of man. Though, as the Omnipotent One, God predestined the fall, and though, as Supreme Ruler, he executes his plan even by means of sin; nevertheless, he remains holy and righteous; of his own accord man falls and sins: the guilt is his alone. "Man falls according to the appointment of divine providence, but he falls by his own fault." Also, the supralapsarians did not arrive at their conception by means of philosophical speculation, but they presented their view because they considered it to come closer to the teaching of Scripture. Just as Augustine arrived at the doctrine of predestination through his study of Paul, so Calvin became convinced of the truth of supralapsarianism by means of his reflection on the Scriptural doctrine of sin.

According to his own statement he was not giving a philosophy but the truth of God's Word. On the other hand, Reformed infralapsarian theologians are fully agreed that man's fall, sin, and the eternal punishment of many was not the object of "bare foreknowledge" but of God's decree and foreordination. Hence, the difference does not concern the content of God's counsel. Both infra- and supralapsarianism deny the freedom of the will, reject the idea that faith is the cause of election and that sin is the cause of reprobation, and thus oppose Pelagianism; both in the final analysis pay homage to God's sovereignty. The difference concerns only the order of the decrees. Infralapsarians prefer the historical, causal order; supralapsarians defend the ideal, teleological order. The former give a more limited meaning to the concept predestination, and exclude from it a preceding creation, fall, and providence; the latter subsume all the other decrees under predestination. The former emphasizes the manyness, the latter the oneness, of the decree. With the former each of the several decrees has significance by itself; with the latter all the preceding decrees are subordinate to the final decree.

The problem is not solved by means of an appeal to Scripture. Whereas infralapsarianism is supported by all those passages in which election and reprobation have reference to a fallen universe, and are represented as deeds of mercy and of justice, Deut. 7:6-8; Matt. 12:25, 26; John 15:19; Rom. 9:15, 16; Eph. 1:4-12; II Tim. 1:9; supralapsarianism seeks its strength in all those texts that declare God's absolute sovereignty, especially with reference to sin, Ps. 115:3; Prov. 16:4; Is. 10:15; 45:9; Jer. 18:6; Matt. 20:15; Rom. 9:17, 19-21. The fact that each of the two views leans for support on a certain group of texts without doing full justice to a different group indicates the one-sided character of both theories. Though infralapsarianism deserves praise because of its modesty — it abides by the historical, causal order — and though it *seems* to be less offensive and though it shows greater consideration for the demands of practical life, it fails to give satisfaction. It is just as difficult to conceive of *reprobation* as an act of God's justice as it is thus to conceive of election. Faith and good works, to be sure, are not the cause of election, but neither is sin the cause of reprobation; God's sovereign good pleasure is the cause of both; hence, in a certain sense, the decree of reprobation always precedes the decree to permit sin. Moreover, if in the divine consciousness the decree of reprobation follows that to permit sin, the question cannot be suppressed, "Then why did God permit sin?" Did this permission consist in a "bare foreknowledge" and was the fall in reality a frustration of God's plan? But no Reformed theologian, even though he be an infralapsarian, can ever or may ever say this. In a certain sense he must include the fall in God's decree; he must conceive of it as having been foreordained. But why did God "by an efficacious permission" foreordain the fall? Infralapsarianism can answer this question only by referring to God's good pleasure, and then it agrees with supralapsarianism. Reprobation cannot be explained as an act of God's justice, for the first sinful deed at any rate was permitted by God's sovereignty. Reasoning backward, infralapsarianism finally arrives at the position of supralapsarianism; in case it should be unwilling to admit this, it would have to resort to foreknowledge. Add to all this the fact that *infra* places the decree of reprobation *after* the fall, but just where? Is *original* sin the only sin that is taken into account by the decree of reprobation, and in making this dreadful decree does God leave *actual* sins entirely out of consideration? If, as *infra* insists, reprobation must be referred to God's justice, then instead of placing this decree immediately after the entrance of original sin, why not place it after the complete accomplishment — respectively by each reprobate person — of all actual sins? This is exactly what was done by Arminius — who also included the sin of foreseen unbelief — but such a procedure would never do on the part of a Reformed theologian. Reprobation would then become dependent upon bare foreknowledge, i.e., upon man; man's sinful deeds would then become the final and deepest cause of reprobation; hence, in order to avoid this error the decree of reprobation was placed *immediately* after the fall. But by doing this *infra* becomes supralapsarian with respect to all *actual* sins: reprobation does not precede original sin, but it does precede all other sin. At first glance infralapsarianism seems to be more moderate and less offensive than supralapsarianism, but deeper study reveals the fact that appearances deceive.

Accordingly, supralapsarianism undoubtedly has in its favor the fact that it refrains from every attempt to justify God, and that both with respect to reprobation and with respect to election it rests in God's sovereign, incomprehensible, yet wise and holy good pleasure. Nevertheless, it is at least just as unsatisfactory as is infralapsarianism, and perhaps even more so. It wishes to pass for a solution, but in no sense whatever does it give a solution of even a single problem. In the first place, to say that the manifestation of all God's excellencies is the final goal of all of the ways of God is indeed correct; but when supra includes in that goal the manner in which the divine glory will be revealed in the eternal destiny of rational creatures, it errs. For, the eternal state of salvation or of perdition is not in itself the goal, but one of the means employed in order to reveal God's excellencies in a manner suited to the creature. It would not do to say that God would have been unable to manifest his glory by saving all men, if this had been his pleasure. Neither is it correct to say that in the eternal state of the reprobate God reveals his justice *exclusively*, and that in the eternal state of the elect he manifests his mercy *exclusively*. Also in the church, purchased with the blood of the Son, God's justice is revealed; and also in the place of perdition there are degrees of punishment and sparks of divine mercy.

The final goal of all God's work's must needs be his glory, but the manner in which that glory will shine forth is not thereby given, but has been determined by God's will; and although there were wise and holy reasons why God purposed the perdition of many and not the salvation of all, nevertheless these reasons, though known to him, are not known to us: we are not able to say why God willed to make use of this means and not of another. A further objection to supralapsarianism is the fact that according to this view the objects of the decree of election and reprobation are men considered merely as possibilities and — as Comrie added — a Christ viewed as a mere possibility. To be sure by some this element has been eliminated from the supralapsarian scheme. But the principle which gave rise to this error still remains. Logic requires that a possible Christ should be added to possible men as the object of election, for in the decree of election the church and its Head, i.e., the saved and the Savior cannot be separated.

But even aside from this, the decree of election and reprobation which has for its object "creatable and fallible men" is not the real, but merely a tentative decree. In the end supralapsarianism is forced to proceed to the infralapsarian order in the elements of the decree. For, following the decree concerning the election and reprobation of these possible men comes the decree to create them and to permit them to fall, and this must be succeeded by another decree respecting these men, who are now no longer viewed as mere possibilities but as realities — even in the decree — viz., to elect some and to reprobate others. The logic of the supralapsarian scheme is very weak, indeed. Supralapsarianism really differs from infralapsarianism only in this respect, viz., that after the manner of

Amyraldism, it prefixes a decree concerning possibilities to the infralapsarian series of decrees. But just how are we to conceive of a decree respecting *possible* men, whose *actual* future existence has as yet not been determined? In the consciousness of God there is an infinite number of "*possible* men," who will never live. Hence, the decree of election and reprobation has for its object "nonentities," not definite persons known to God by name. Finally, there is this difficulty connected with *supra*, viz., that it makes the eternal punishment of the reprobates an object of the divine will *in the same manner and in the same sense* as the eternal salvation of the elect; and that it makes sin, which leads to eternal destruction, a means *in the same manner and in the same sense* as the redemption in Christ is a means unto eternal salvation.

Now Reformed theologians all agree that the entrance of sin and punishment was willed and determined by God. It is perfectly true that words like "permission" and "foreknowledge" do not solve anything. The difficulty remains the same, and the same questions arise; viz., why, if God foreknew everything, did he create man fallible, and why did he not prevent the fall? Why did he allow all men to fall in Adam? Why does he not grant to all men faith and the blessing of hearing the Gospel? In brief, if God foreknows and permits something, he does this either "willingly" or "unwillingly." The latter is impossible. Accordingly, only the former remains: God's permission is an "efficacious permission," an act of his will. Nor should it be supposed that the idea of permission is of any force or value over against the charge that God is the Author of sin; for he who *permits or allows* someone to sin and to perish in his sin although he was able to prevent him from sinning is just as guilty as he who incites someone to sin. On the other hand, however, all agree that although sin is not "*excluded*" from the will of God it is, nevertheless, "*contrary*" to his will; that it is not merely a means to the final goal, but a disturbance in God's creation; and that Adam's fall was not a step ahead but a fall in the real sense of the word. It is also a fact that admits of no doubt that, however much logical reasoning may demur, no one is able to suggest other and better words than "permission, foreknowledge, preterition, dereliction," etc. Even the most outspoken supralapsarian is not able to dispense with these words, neither in the pulpit nor in the cathedra. For, although it be admitted that there is a "predestination unto death," no Reformed theologian has ever dared to speak of a "predestination unto sin." Without any exception all (i.e., Zwingli, Calvin, Beza, Zanchius, Gomarus, Comrie, etc.) have rejected the idea that God is the Author of sin, that man was created unto damnation, that reprobation is the "cause" of sin, and that sin is the "efficient cause" of reprobation; and all have maintained, that the inexorable character of God's justice is manifest in the decree of reprobation, that reprobation is the "accidental cause" of sin, and that sin is the "sufficient cause" of reprobation, etc. Accordingly and happily, supralapsarianism is always inconsistent: it begins by making a daring leap, but it soon retreats and returns to the previously abandoned position of infralapsarianism. This is very evident from the works of supralapsarians. Nearly all of them hesitate to place the decree of reprobation in its entirety and without any restriction before the decree to permit sin. The Thomists differentiated

between a “negative and a positive reprobation”; the former was made to precede creation and fall, the latter was made to follow them. This same distinction, be it in a modified form, recurs in the works of Reformed theologians. Not only do all admit that reprobation should be distinguished from condemnation, which is the execution of that decree, takes place in time, and has sin for its cause; but in the decree of reprobation itself many differentiate between a preceding, general purpose of God to reveal his excellencies, especially his mercy and justice, in certain “creatable and fallible men”; and a subsequent, definite purpose to create these “possible men,” to permit them to fall and to sin, and to punish them for their sins.

Accordingly, neither supra- nor infralapsarianism has succeeded in its attempt to solve this problem and to do justice to the many-sidedness of Scripture. To a certain extent this failure is due to the one-sidedness that characterizes both views. In the first place it is incorrect, as we stated before, to define the “final goal” of all things as the revelation of God's mercy in the elect, and of his justice in the reprobate. God's glory and the manifestation of his excellencies is, to be sure, the final goal of all things; but the double state of salvation and damnation is not included in that final goal, but is related to it as a means. No one is able to prove that this double state must of necessity constitute an element in the final goal of God's glory. In all his “outgoing works” God always has in view his own glory; but that he seeks to establish this glory in *this* and in no other way is to be ascribed to his sovereignty and to nothing else. But even aside from this, it is not true that God manifests his justice only in the damnation of the reprobate, and his mercy only in the salvation of the elect, for also in heaven God's justice and holiness shines forth, and also in hell there is a remnant of his mercy and compassion. Secondly, it is incorrect to represent the lost condition of the reprobate in hell as an object of predestination. To be sure, sin should not be referred to “bare foreknowledge and permission”; in a certain sense, the fall, sin, and eternal punishment are included in God's decree and willed by him. But this is true *in a certain sense* only, and not in the same sense as grace and salvation.

These are the objects of his delight; but God does not delight in sin, neither has he pleasure in punishment. When he makes sin subservient to his glory, he does this by means of the exercise of his omnipotence, but to glorify God is contrary to sin's nature. And when he punishes the wicked, he does not take delight in their sufferings as such, but in this punishment he celebrates, the triumph of his virtues, Deut. 28:63; Ps. 2:4; Prov. 1:26; Lam. 3:33. Accordingly, though on the one hand, with a view to the all-comprehensive and immutable character of God's counsel, it is not wrong to speak of a “twofold predestination” (*gemina praedestinatio*); nevertheless, on the other hand, we must be careful to keep in mind that in the one case predestination is of a different nature than in the other. “Predestination is the disposition, goal and ordination of the means with a view to a goal. Since eternal damnation is not the goal but merely the termination of a person's life, therefore reprobation cannot properly be classified under predestination. For these two things are in conflict with each other: to ordain unto

a goal and to ordain unto damnation. For by reason of its very nature, every goal is the very best something, the perfection of an object; damnation, however, is the extreme evil and the greatest imperfection; hence the expression 'God has predestinated some men unto damnation' is incorrect." Hence, no matter how often and clearly Scripture tells us that sin and punishment were ordained by God, nevertheless, the words "purpose" (*prothesis*), "foreknowledge" (*prognosis*) and "foreordination" (*proorismos*) are used almost exclusively with reference to "predestination unto glory." In the third place, there is still another ground for the assertion that those err who coordinate "predestination unto eternal death" with "predestination unto eternal life," and view the former as a goal in the same sense as the latter; while it is true that certain *individuals* constitute the object of reprobation, *the human race* under a new Head, namely Christ, is the object of election; hence, by grace not only certain individuals are saved, but the human race itself together with the entire cosmos is saved. Moreover, we are not to suppose that merely a few of God's virtues are revealed in this salvation of the human race and of the universe, so that in order to reveal God's justice the state of eternal perdition must needs be called into being; on the contrary, in the consummated Kingdom of God all of God's virtues and excellencies are unfolded: his justice and his grace, his holiness and his love, his sovereignty and his mercy. Hence, this "state of glory" is the real and direct end of creation, though even this goal is subordinate to the exaltation of God. In the fourth place, both supra and infra err when they regard the various elements of the decree as standing in subordinate relation to each other. Now it is true, of course, that the means are subordinate to the final end in view, but from this it does not follow that they are subordinate to one another. Creation is not a mere means toward the fall, neither is the fall a mere means toward grace and perseverance, nor are these in turn merely means toward salvation and perdition. We should never lose sight of the fact that the decrees are as rich in content as the entire history of the universe, for the latter is the unfoldment of the former. The history of the universe can never be made to fit into a little scheme of logic. It is entirely incorrect to suppose that of the series: creation, fall, sin, Christ, faith, unbelief, etc., each constituent is merely a means toward the attainment of the next, which as soon as it is present renders the former useless. As Twissus already remarked, "The different elements of the decree do not stand to one another in a relation merely of subordination, but they are also coordinately related." It is certainly wrong to suppose that the sole purpose of creation was to produce the fall; on the contrary, by means of God's creative activity a universe that will remain even in the state of glory was called into being. The fall took place not only in order that there might be a "creature in the condition of misery," but together with all its consequences it will retain its significance. Christ not merely became a *Mediator*, which would have been all that was necessary for the expiation of sin, but he was also ordained by God to be the *Head* of the church. The history of the universe is not a mere means which loses its value as soon as the end of the age is reached, but it has influence and leaves fruits, for eternity. Moreover, here on earth we should not conceive of election and reprobation as two straight and parallel lines; on the contrary, in the unbeliever there is much that is not the result

of reprobation, and in the believer there is much that should not be ascribed to election. On the one hand, both election and reprobation presuppose sin, and are deeds of mercy and of justice, Rom. 9:15; Eph. 1:4; on the other hand both are also deeds of divine right and sovereignty, Rom. 9:11, 17, 21. So, Adam even before the fall is a type of Christ, I Cor. 15:47ff.; nevertheless, in Scripture the fact of the incarnation always rests upon the fall of the human race, Heb. 2:14ff. At times Scripture expresses itself so strongly that reprobation and election are coordinated, and God is represented as having purposed eternal perdition as well as eternal salvation, Luke 2:34; John 3:19-21; I Pet. 2:7, 8; Rom. 9:17, 18, 22, etc.; but in other passages eternal death is entirely absent in the description of the future; the victorious consummation of the kingdom of God, the new heaven and earth, the new Jerusalem in which God will be all and in all is pictured to us as the end of all things, I Cor. 15; Rev. 21, 22; the universe is represented as existing for the church, and the church for Christ, I Cor. 3 :21-23; and reprobation is completely subordinated to election.

Accordingly, neither the supra- nor the infralapsarian view of predestination is able to do full justice to the truth of Scripture, and to satisfy our theological thinking. The true element in supralapsarianism is: that it emphasizes the unity of the divine decree and the fact that God had one final aim in view, that sin's entrance into the universe was not something unexpected and unlooked for by God but that he willed sin in a certain sense, and that the work of creation was immediately adapted to God's redemptive activity so that even before the fall, i.e., in the creation of Adam, Christ's coming was definitely fixed. And the true element in infralapsarianism is: that the decrees manifest not only a unity but also a diversity (with a view to their several objects), that these decrees reveal not only a teleological but also a causal order, that creation and fall cannot merely be regarded as means to an end, and that sin should be regarded not as an element of progress but rather as an element of disturbance in the universe so that in and by itself it cannot have been willed by God. In general, the formulation of the final goal of all things in such a manner that God reveals his justice in the reprobate and his mercy in the elect is too simple and incomplete.

The "state of glory" will be rich and glorious beyond all description. We expect a new heaven, a new earth, a new humanity, a renewed universe, a constantly progressing and undisturbed unfoldment. Creation and the fall, Adam and Christ, nature and grace, faith and unbelief, election and reprobation — all together and each in its own way — are so many factors, acting not only subsequently to but also in coordination with one another, collaborating with a view to that exalted state of glory. Indeed, even the universe as it now exists together with its history, constitutes a continuous revelation of God's virtues. It is not only a means toward a higher and richer revelation that is still future, but it has value in itself. It will continue to exert its influence also in the coming dispensation, and it will continue to furnish material for the exaltation and glorification of God by a redeemed humanity. Accordingly, between the different elements of the decree — as also between the facts of the history of the universe — there is not only a causal and

teleological but also an organic relation. Because of the limited character of our reasoning powers we must needs proceed from the one or from the other viewpoint; hence, the advocates of a causal world and life-view and the defenders of a teleological philosophy are engaged in continual warfare. But this disharmony does not exist in the mind of God. He sees the whole, and surveys all things in their relations. All things are eternally present in his consciousness. His decree is a unity: it is a single conception. And in that decree all the different elements assume the same relation which a posteriori we even now observe between the facts of history, and which will become fully disclosed in the future.

This relation is so involved and complicated that neither the adjective "supralapsarian" nor "infralapsarian" nor any other term is able to express it. It is both causal and teleological: that which precedes exerts its influence upon that which follows, and that which is still future already determines the past and the present. There is a rich, all-sided "reciprocity." Predestination, in the generally accepted sense of that term: the foreordination of the eternal state of rational creatures and of all the means necessary to that end, is not the sole, all-inclusive and all-comprehensive, purpose of God. It is a very important part of God's decree but it is not synonymous with the decree. God's decree or counsel is the main concept because it is all-comprehensive; it embraces all things without any exception: heaven and earth, spirit and matter, visible and invisible things, organic and inorganic creatures; it is the single will of God concerning the entire universe with reference to the past, the present, and the future. But predestination concerns the eternal state of rational creatures, and the *means* thereto: but not *all* things that ever come into being nor all events that ever happen can be included in these means. Hence, in a previous paragraph we discussed "providence" as a thing by itself, although the relation between it and predestination was clearly shown. In the doctrine of God's decree common grace should receive a much more detailed discussion than was formerly the case, and should be recognized in its own rights. Briefly stated, God's decree together with the history of the universe which answers to it should not be exclusively described — after the manner of infra- and supralapsarianism — as a straight line indicating a relation merely of before and after, cause and effect, means and goal; but it should also be viewed as a system the several elements of which are coordinately related to one another and cooperate with one another toward that goal which always was and is and will be the deepest ground of all existence, namely, the glorification of God. As in an organism all the members are dependent upon one another and in a reciprocal manner determine one another, so also the universe is God's work of art, the several parts of which are organically related. And of that universe, considered in its length and breadth, the counsel or decree of God is the eternal idea.

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