

A FEW NOTES CONCERNING  
ELECTION/SALVATION

© copyright 2002  
by: Mr. Gary S. Dykes

In my personal Biblical studies, and indeed in my personal library, observers will note that a certain aspect of theological perspectives is not well represented. This aspect is in the realm of systematic theology, that is texts which explain and describe various theological systems developed by various theologians over time. One will find—Chafer's systematic theology, Baker's dispensational theology, Calvin's Institutes, several works by various Arminian-minded scholars, and a sprinkling of various concepts from the ancient church fathers onward. Supplementing this mixture is a significant amount of religious history in which many religious distinctions and creeds are noted.

Due, perhaps to the above limitations, is a lack of clear information on the subject of various positions within the Calvinistic understanding; in particular the *supralapsarian* view. It is supposed that a clear treatise upon this subject exists, but this author does not possess it, nor have I seen such a work. Consequently, a brief account of my supralapsarian position and a justification for it follows.

The prime tenet of a supralapsarian position is the concept that God did first elect (chose) various peoples as His, before any type of creation. In other words God's first decree was election, then followed creation, then the fall, a provision for salvation was made, and lastly the provision for salvation was applied. The order appears thusly:

- ◆ The decree to elect some for salvation, others not elect.
- ◆ The decree to create humans in Adam (constituting both elect and non-elect).
- ◆ The decree to allow the fall.
- ◆ The decree to provide for salvation of the elect.
- ◆ The decree to apply this salvation to the elect.

I was not born with a supralapsarian understanding, it has been slowly developed over the years as I have studied the Bible, it is the most satisfactory position which coincides with Bible truth as I perceive it. As the years pass my view may grow or change slightly, which understanding tempers my dogmatism.

It is easy to find objections to the supralapsarian position, indeed most "fundamental" groups in America adhere to an *infralapsarian* or *sublapsarian* position: both of these views move the first decree so as to follow the creation and fall decrees. One of the common objections to the supralapsarian position is that it is inconceivable that God could reckon a person as elect when such a person does not yet exist or is not yet created. This objection makes good sense on the surface. Thus, they place the creation decree before the election decree. Against this objection lies a salient fact, this objection is injecting human understanding into the mind of God! Supporters of the objection insist that a person must first exist as a creation before God can choose. In support of their argument they use such passages of Scripture as Romans 9:18, (ASV)

So then he hath mercy on whom he will, and whom he will he hardeneth.

Focus is upon the pronouns "whom" by which they declare that a "whom" must first be created in order for God to display mercy or election. Herein lies their basic flaw, they are supposing that God can only perceive beings as do humans. They are saying that God must view "beings" as from the limited human perspective. Instead of forcing God to adjust to our level of cognition why not allow Him to transcend our limited comprehension?

It is suggested that God comprehends a human or a "being" simply from the concept of a name or thought. The "being" need not yet exist as a fleshly creature. This definition of "being" (existing only as a name or thought) is difficult to grasp from a human understanding due to the formation of philosophical canons of thinking. By formal definition a "being" must exist in terms which a human can grasp, this is probably not the case with God, as God should be able to fully comprehend "beings" without three dimensional forms! This concept requires faith, and since it is of faith, it is open to the attacks and challenges of the rationalists. Note the primacy of "will" in the following quote, it precedes creation! (Revelation 4:11, NASB):

Worthy art Thou, our Lord and our God, to receive glory and honor and power; for Thou didst create all things, and because of Thy will they existed, and were created.

Another type of objection used to oppose a true supralapsarian view concerns an example of the word for "chose" or "elect". John 6:70, in which Jesus chooses the Twelve, is often utilized to demonstrate that just because Jesus "chooses" someone, that choice does not indicate salvation (or "eternal security"). In using John 6:70, a fatal error is generated when

they apply this meaning (*id est* that "choose" must always equal "salvation"), note John 6:70 (ASV):

Jesus answered them, Did not I choose you the twelve, and one of you is a devil?

In this passage it needs to be pointed out that "choose" (ἐξελεξάμην) does not indicate salvation, rather it only shows a choosing of 12 *as messengers* as Judas was probably never reckoned as saved. Seeing Judas here, Arminians declare that Jesus' election (choosing) therefore must not equal salvation (or that He is not able to keep His chosen!). Obviously here, this verb "choose" does not equate with that election which indicates salvation as seen in John 15:16. These interpreters are guilty of ignoring the semantic connotations of words which the context supplies. In John 6:70 they force upon the word the notion of that particular type of election which has an ultimate salvation in view (as does John 15:19). If they are correct in declaring that all usages of this Greek verb must indicate an eschatological salvation then what must they think of the same verb in such passages as Luke 14:7?

And he put forth a parable to those which were bidden, when he marked how they chose out the chief rooms; saying unto them,

Here the "invited guests" (the "bidden") are choosing certain places in which to dine, if we follow the argument as poised above, then these places are chosen for salvation, which is absurd! Hence the fallacy of their argument is obvious. Not all usages of the word for election or choosing equate with salvation, the individual contexts supply the connotated meaning to the verb or noun. In numerous Biblical passages, in both the LXX and in the New Testament, "choose" can have a variety of meanings; one of which is that form of election which consummates in salvation.

An example of such confused semantics is easy to find in the writings of the Arminian—J. Rodman Williams (refer to volume 2 of his work entitled, *Renewal Theology*, Zondervan, 1990, page 128, note 39), herein he abuses John 6:70 as prior illustrated.

Keeping this aspect in mind, the perversion of basic semantics, we may return to the prior issue of "beings" being chosen. Not only did the elect prior exist before their physical birth, but they prior existed in a very unique Person, in such a manner which is not fully apprehensible.

Many fine Bible scholars will note that in II Corinthians 5:17 a new creation is manifest. Actually the word "creation" is better rendered here as "creature" (per the NASB). Colossians 1:15 can add some needed perspective here: (ASV)

Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature:

The "firstborn of every creature" means in its Colossian's context, that Jesus Christ is first in every sense, and that of those who are and who will be resurrected from the dead, the good Lord was the first of that unique group—note Colossians 1:18. Jesus Christ is the Head of the Body of believers (or, the elect), in Him all believers exist. Believers believe because God gave them the ability to believe. Those who were not able to express their God-given faith (due to a premature death, or due to other reasons) are still elect, and hence still saved as salvation is not conditioned by any human response or statement. What the elect are led to believe does not in any way alter God's prior choice of them! However make a special note of this statement—normally the elect respond to the good news concerning Jesus Christ, thus manifesting their faith. This is the normal scenario. Additionally the *Westminster Confession*, x.3, also declares a similar observation, that election is not always based upon a recipient's response.

Until Jesus Christ was resurrected, the elect existed without a Head per se! they existed in a unique state having no true body! This is true of Adam as well as all of those elected souls who followed. God has placed all elected souls (believers) into this body of Christ, some in an earthly portion some in a heavenly portion; both portions will experience their final unity in the distant future—Ephesians 1:10. Nevertheless, in God's mind one may assume that they already existed in Christ before the creation of the universe! This sublime thought is reinforced by the text of Ephesians 1:3,4: (KJV)

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly *places* in Christ: According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love:

In this KJV quote "foundation" is the Greek καταβολης, a term which denotes "conception" or "beginning". Each elected person existed in Christ before creation. In exactly what manner or form we are not told, but the fact of the matter is that the elect did somehow "exist" in the mind of God, as in the Body of Christ, before creation. We pre-existed in Christ! A Bible student might now declare that Romans 16:7 (which states that several persons were in Christ before Paul) indicates that various peoples are placed "in Christ" at

differing times. This apparent conundrum is explained in part by Galatians 1:22, and by the observation that these persons were probably *aware* of their salvation before Paul learned of his election/salvation (on the road to Damascus!).

Romans 8:29 is often distorted in many translations. For example the NASB adds the words "to become", such addition causes the reader to not associate the time of the verb "predestined" with the same tense verb "conformed". Since we are in Christ, as an image, we ought to recognize that as Jesus is the image of God, so we are of Christ! This speaks of our position; in our experience here on earth, each of us is asked to "clothe" ourselves with Christ, that is to strive to live as He desires, and to think as He desires. This request for us to put on Christ does not mean to imply that this is not our position in the heavenlies as already in Christ, Ephesians 2:6.

The newness of II Corinthians 5:17, is simply the actual historical manifestation of the event, that event is the placing (baptism) of each elected person **into** the Person of the resurrected Christ. This is the actual act, but it was pre-conceived in eternity past as an actual fact in the mind of God. This is the clear and logical conclusion which this writer acknowledges.

It is also true, that at one time we the elect of this dispensation, were formerly dead. This is noted in such passages as Ephesians 2:1-8, (KJV)

*And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins: Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:*

One may declare, therefore, that if we were dead, then we could not have prior existed as saved or as an elected being(s), as "existence" can mean alive, and thus God would not have created dead beings. This reasoning misses the fact that our death (that is, the death of the elect) is a judicial death, it is a sentence. Jesus Christ died in the elect's stead, as John 3:16 indicates (with "world" equaling the "elect" in this verse). The context of the above Ephesian passage dictates that during the ages before the "church age" God dealt exclusively

with the nation of Israel, from whom the elect were drawn. Proselytes were the only non-Jewish elect manifested during the dispensation of the Law. (Though an argument can be generated which can suggest that some of these elected non-Jews were not, or perhaps were not known as true proselytes to Judaism, for example the Ninevite's of Jonah's day and the Samaritan woman at the well).

**Dispensationally**, the non-Jews of the world were without hope, and were not a pool of peoples from whom the elect could be drawn out of, generally speaking none were elect. Hence, none of the elect were truly viewed as dead (with "dead" meaning totally without God).

Ultimate death is eternal separation from God, and this occurs when the non-elect are placed into the Lake of Fire (Gehenna). Jesus Christ experienced a separation from God; upon the cross God turned from the crucified Lord, and darkness covered the land. We believers too, were crucified with Christ, and thus our sins and corrupt natures were separated from God. However, our corrupt natures still live in our fleshly bodies and minds, not until our rapture will we be entirely free. Yet in God's mind we now exist without these hindrances! We exist in Christ! Our current battles against the flesh (in which we now dwell) may bear fruit and growth for us, but we are viewed as complete and perfect in the mind of God, He sees not our fleshly natures, He sees us in Christ! In spite of this glorious position, God has given to each of the elect the indwelling Holy Spirit Who assists us with our current daily struggles against the present world and our corrupt spiritual natures.

When Jesus Christ died, He still existed. When Paul states that the elect (or, the "you" of Ephesians 2:1) were dead in their trespasses and sins, He seems to mean that they were legally and judicially dead in accordance with the Law, but since the introduction of this "church" age (or the age of grace) the elected non-Jews are no longer viewed as such. Finally, recall that God is God of the living, not of the dead.

All of this implies that the "new creature" of II Corinthians 5:17 must mean that from the time in which the Holy Spirit placed each elected person into the Body of Christ, a new creature was manifest. Prior to this manifestation to angels and the departed souls (and all other heavenly observers!) this Body existed in the mind of God, to Him it was not "new". So, it is suggested that "new" in II Corinthians 5:17 and Ephesians 2:15, refers to the new reality as *perceived by men and angels, but not new to God*. This new fusion of Jew and non-Jew into one Body without distinction was new only in that it was never the normal procedure under the prior dispensation of Law. Even a proselyte of old, was a unique blend of Jew and non-Jew, howbeit under the legal covenant of the Law. This current manifestation (thus "new") is part of the fabric which makes up a portion of the Pauline revelations, a part

of the "mystery". It was not fully revealed in times past, but since Paul's revelations were made known, this new creature was introduced to the created universe to observe as it grows. It also contains other details which are denoted by the adjective "new", such as the fact that in this age believers are now walking "temples" of the Holy Spirit! (Ephesians 3:8-11, KJV)

Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, was this grace given, to preach unto the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; and to make all men see what is the dispensation of the mystery which for ages hath been hid in God who created all things; to the intent that now unto the principalities and the powers in the heavenly *places* might be made known through the church the manifold wisdom of God according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord,

God had already prior determined and willed that the elect were in the Body of Christ. This prior determination of His was not fully revealed until the time of the Apostle Paul. Indeed, even the final conception of the entire Body will not be fully visible nor comprehended until the end of the ages, Ephesians 1:10. Yet the fact remains that God indicates to us, that He had this already conceived in His mind. Christ pre-existed before the creation, we pre-existed in Christ before the creation, John 1:1, and Ephesians 1:4, 2:10.

Ephesians 3:12 declares that we Gentiles were "separate" from Christ, the separation was only a temporary dispensational separation, and during those past dispensations few if any of the Gentiles were elect! For the elect, from whatever dispensation, have always been in Christ in the mind of God. This apparent conflict is the essence of this brief exposition, we note an existing tension between the reasoning of men as opposed to the reasoning of God. (Assuming that my apprehensions of God's reasonings are valid!). Human judges are want to impose upon God their reasonings, and thus limit God. This occurs because all other literatures can be so handled, but the Scriptures are not like other literatures, they are unique and are not truly subject to the whims of mere mortals. Man cannot counsel God, we cannot dictate to Him, believers may pray, but God is not to be encapsulated within the narrow confines of human reasoning. This explanation of my understanding is simply an explanation, it is to be examined and tried, it is not meant to project absolute truths and unalterable insights into the Word of God; it is hoped that they may encourage growth and genuine interest in these nebulous subjects.

A supralapsarian view of God's decrees rests largely upon faith and upon a certain method of Biblical interpretation. Though the interpretation is logical and literal, it contains various *a priori* ingredients, and is thus subject to scrutiny by those who may not accept a

transcendent Being such as God. Human reasoning is useful and needed in Biblical studies and exposition, but human reasoning cannot fully explain nor comprehend God's reasonings. Believers must, at this time be satisfied that God knows what He is doing, even if we cannot always understand His will! How the elect existed in Christ before the creation of the universe is not a matter for us to fully apprehend and why God decided to graciously include non-Jews in His dealings with humans is not for us to fully understand.

When God states that we were prior chosen in Christ before we were created, and that we were created in Christ, such information is not classed as human imaginations, it should be perceived as a reality. This information was made known primarily after the fact (that is, it was not made abundantly clear in the OT\*). This wonderful reality was first made known by the Apostle Paul, and in it we can discern some of the central characteristics of Divine Election, an election totally independent of human will or human desires. Independent because it existed as a reality before humans expressed their will corporately in the Garden of Eden. From this deduction a supralapsarian view acquires some of its necessary elements for validation.

---

\* There are numerous OT passages which do direct the student to ultimately recognize that the chosen are secure in God, such as Psalms 37:28, 145:20, and Genesis 17:7,8 coupled with Galatians 3:16!