



## The Heresy of Limited Atonement Is Bèzaism Not Calvinism; Bèza's Version of Supralapsarianism Produces Doctrinal & Logical Absurdities

13. Since the original publication of Kendall's book in 1981, those of the limited atonement camp have sought to discredit his research. In the Preface of his New Edition, Kendall answers his critics:

### Kendall, *Calvin and English Calvinism*, v:

'A man convinced against his will is of the same opinion still.' Even if I answered my critics line by line the 'Yes, but' syndrome would not close down. I must say that I have yet to read a refutation of my research that was done by one who had no aspirations along traditional Reformed lines.

14. What Kendall did discover is that the limited atonement view was developed in Calvin's name after his death by his protégé and successor, Theodore Bèza \Bè' za\ . This is exposed by Kendall in chapter two of his book, "Theodore Bèza and the Heidelberg Theologians" (pp. 29-41).
15. Fundamental in the development of Bèza's doctrine was the belief that Christ died for the elect only.
16. This means that those individuals who were elected by God in eternity past are the *only ones* for whom Christ died. All others are said to be "reprobate." These were brought into existence with no hope of salvation and are left to die in their sins without hope or recourse.
17. Kendall summarizes this view: those for whom Christ died must necessarily be saved; those for whom He did not die must necessarily be damned (p. 29).
18. Bèza therefore takes the *death* of Christ, which is summed up by the word "atonement," and links it with the doctrine of *election* in such a way that election *predetermines* one's salvation.
19. From this concept Bèza developed a system that later became known as supralapsarianism.
20. This term is not as complicated as it appears. The prefix *supra-* means "above, over, or before." In the middle is the word "lapse" which comes for the Latin word *lapsus*, meaning "fall." The two suffixes at the end are *-ian* and *-ism*. The former refers to those who believe in the principle that man is fallen. The latter indicates that it constitutes a belief system or a doctrine. Therefore, if you believe in the doctrine that mankind is "fallen" then you are a lapsarian and you are a proponent of lapsarianism.
21. Bèza's system contends that in eternity past when God sovereignly determined how He would deal with the eternal future of the human race, He decreed to elect a few to salvation but not all.
22. Bèza further contended that if God's elective decree was placed in a logical order then the act of election would occur before His decision to permit the fall. Thus, Bèza's system became known as supralapsarianism: he believed the doctrine of the fall but asserted that election logically occurred *before* the fall.

### The Supralapsarian Order of the Elective Decrees

- 1- The decree to elect some to be saved and to reprobate all others.
- 2- The decree to create men, both elect and non-elect.



- 3- The decree to permit the fall.
- 4- The decree to provide salvation for the elect.
- 5- The decree to apply salvation to the elect.

23. Note that according to Bèza, the decrees of election and reprobation occur first and thus have logical priority over the decrees to create mankind and permit the fall.
24. The decree to elect some to be saved and to reprobate all others results in the doctrine of double predestination: men, not yet created, are predetermined for either heaven or the lake of fire and human free will is not a substantial consideration.
25. Note the heresy: some men not yet created and not yet fallen are condemned by the justice of God! These so-called “reprobates” are not candidates for redemption because Christ did not die for their sins.
26. Another inconsistency: the elect are said to be redeemed before they are created and before they fall. But redemption can only apply to those who are fallen!
27. Nevertheless, Bèza contends that God through Christ, saves the elect only. The death of Christ on the cross becomes the *means* of saving the elect, not the faith of the individual.
28. Bèza interprets Ephesians 1:4 to mean that since election occurred in eternity past then salvation of the elect is an accomplished fact. (p. 32)
29. Problem: How does the elected person know of his election and thus have assurance of his salvation?
30. Unlimited atonement asserts that Christ died for all mankind. Thus when the sinner expresses his personal faith in Christ he may surely know that he is saved.
31. But under the principle of limited atonement, the sinner has no way of knowing whether or not he is among those for whom Christ died. The resultant dilemma is evaluated by Kendall:

Bèza has told us Christ died for the elect. This makes trusting Christ's death presumptuous: we could be putting our trust in One who did not die for us and therefore be damned. Thus we can no more trust Christ's death by a direct act of faith than we can infallibly project that we are among the number chosen from eternity: for the number of the elect and the number for whom Christ died are one and the same. The ground of assurance, then, must be sought elsewhere than in Christ. (See Kendall, p. 32)

32. Since Christ's atoning sacrifice was limited to a predetermined few, no individual may look to Christ for assurance about his eternal future. Bèza understood the quandary his theology created but, undaunted, he came up with a solution.

**Bèza, Theodore. *A Briefe and Piththie Summe of the Christian Faith*. (1565?), 36, 37:**

[NOTE: Bèza's sixteenth-century spelling is modernized.]

When Satan puts you in doubt of our election, we may not search first the eternal counsel of god whose majesty we cannot comprehend, but on the contrary we must begin at the **sanctification which we feel in ourselves** ... forasmuch as our sanctification, from which proceeds good works, is a certain effect of Jesus Christ dwelling in us by faith. (See Kendall, p. 33)

33. Under Bèza's system, faith in Christ plays no major role in the salvation of the elect, but faith in one's “good works” is essential and even primary in ascertaining whether or not he is one of the elect.



34. Consequently, the object of his assurance is not the work of Christ on the cross but rather his own “good works.” If a person has expressed faith in Christ he does not rely upon biblical assurances that he has eternal life. Instead, he reaches a subjective opinion about this based on a personal evaluation of his own “good works.”
35. These “good works” prove to the person that he is sanctified and that Jesus Christ indwells him. Consequently, faith in one’s “good works” is the proof that one’s faith in Christ was efficacious.