

Chapter III Of God's Eternal Decree

Decree—*The decree(s) of God are His eternal plan based on the purpose of His will, by which, for His own glory, He has foreordained everything that happens. WSC Q. 7*

Propositions—

- I. God has predetermined (decreed) all things that happen.
 - a. That decree is eternal.
 - b. That decree is right & holy.
 - c. That decree is unchangeable.
2. The decree does not make God the Author of sin.
3. The decree does not restrain or subvert the free-agency (free-will) of any creature, but establishes it.

I. God from all eternity, did, by the most wise and holy counsel of His own will, freely, and unchangeable ordain whatsoever comes to pass;⁶⁵

Ephesians 1:11 *In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will,*

Romans 11:33 *Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways!*

Hebrews 6:17 *So when God desired to show more convincingly to the heirs of the promise the unchangeable character of his purpose, he guaranteed it with an oath,*

Romans 9:15-18 *For he says to Moses, "I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion." So then it depends not on human will or exertion, but on God, who has mercy. For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, "For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I might show my power in you, and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth." So then he has mercy on whomever he wills, and he hardens whomever he wills.*

*Luke 12:7 (Matthew 10:29-30), Ephesians 3:11, Acts 15:18, Psalm 2:7, Job 23:14, Acts 4:28, Ephesians 1:9, Lamentations 3:37-38, Psalm 135 (esp. 5-6), Daniel 4:17f (34, 35, 37), **Isaiah 46***

What's the distinctive feature of a person? *A person acts according to purpose, he/she acts purposefully.*

God is a Person(s) (chapter II, 3); and all persons act according to a plan. *He has a plan...*

We go to the store by plan, we work by plan, we build by plan, etc.

The difference is in persons, between us and God our Creator. He is Eternal, Holy, Infinite, Perfect, Immutable, Omniscient, Omnipresent, Omnipotent, etc. (chapter II, 1, 2). *We as His creatures are not.*

We plan *expecting* contingency; *He plans contingency. He will make all things come to the conclusion He has predetermined that will happen.*

How does this (God's sovereign decree) affect the believer's security in Jesus Christ?

How does it affect the desire for sin? *1 John 5:18, 1 Corinthians 10*

This is more than doctrine, it is a world-view—*a view of all things and how they will come to pass.*

Romans 8:28 And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.

Even in seeming random events—1 Kings 22:1-38 (1 Kings 21:19)

There is a true dichotomy here; either God is truly Sovereign, just as His Word describes, or He is not. To say that God is Sovereign is to say that God is just as He describes Himself.

What kind of "plan" or "purpose" must of necessity belong to an Infinite, Immutable, Eternal Person?

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yet so, as thereby neither is God the author of sin,⁶⁶

James 1:13-17 *Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am being tempted by God," for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one. But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death. Do not be deceived, my beloved brothers. Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change.*

1 John 1:5 *This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.*

nor is violence offered to the will of the creatures; nor is the liberty or contingency of second causes taken away, but rather established.⁶⁷

Acts 2:23 *...this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men.*

Acts 4:26-28 *The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers were gathered together, against the Lord and against his Anointed'— for truly in this city there were gathered together against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, to do whatever your hand and your plan had predestined to take place.*

Matthew 17:10-12 *And the disciples asked him, "Then why do the scribes say that first Elijah must come?" He answered, "Elijah does come, and he will restore all things. But I tell you that Elijah has already come, and they did not recognize him, but did to him whatever they pleased. So also the Son of Man will certainly suffer at their hands."*

John 19:11 *Jesus answered him, "You would have no authority over me at all unless it had been given you from above. Therefore he who delivered me over to you has the greater sin."*

Proverbs 16:33 *The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the LORD.*

The free actions of men are also predestined by God. *Please note: these acts are predestined **and also free**, both free and predetermined.*

That is, those who commit the free acts do so because they want to; it is their desire to do so.

And yet the acts which they do are predetermined by God—so that Scripture says *they must happen*.

Matthew 18:7 *"Woe to the world because of offenses! For offenses must come, but woe to that man by whom the offense comes!"*

Two things we must recognize here: 1. The certainty of the future event(s). 2. The ones that perform the act(s) do so freely, and therefore will incur the guilt of them.

Read Acts 2:22-25, 4:26-28, Jude 4-5, Philippians 2:12-14, Ephesians 2:8-10

Both the good acts of God's elect are predetermined and also the evil acts of unbelievers.

So what then is freedom of will?

1828 Webster's—Fatalism:

The doctrine that all things are subject to fate, or that they take place by inevitable necessity.

What is Sovereignty compared to Fatalism?

Merriam-Webster—Fatalism:

-a doctrine that events are fixed in advance so that human beings are powerless to change them,

also : a belief in or attitude determined by this doctrine.

Emphasis mine

To be continued...