

4. The end or final cause of the decrees is God's glory

In Aristotle's classification of causes (formal cause, material cause, efficient cause, final cause), the final cause is the end or goal toward which something moves, the fully developed character of an oak tree (for example) that an acorn will attain, or the purpose for which an artist creates. The final cause is determined at the beginning. Likewise, God's glory is the goal or outcome determined by God at the formulation of His decrees.

5. The decrees are immutable

If God were capricious, or if He were unable to foresee some contingency, or if He were unable to carry out some aspect of His plan, then His decrees would need to be mutable, if He is to achieve His great goal. Since He is constant instead of capricious, omniscient instead of limited in knowledge, and omnipotent instead of limited in power, there is no need of change in His great plan.

6. The decrees embrace whatsoever comes to pass, evil as well as good.

This emphasis agrees with such Scriptures as Ephesians 1:11, Acts 2:23, and Genesis 50:20. In this last Scripture Joseph tells his brothers, "You meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, in order to bring about this present result, to preserve many people alive."

7. The decrees are not addressed to man's obedience. They are concerned, not with what men should do, but with what they will do.

This emphasis calls for certain distinctions in the will of God. When discussing the will of God it is important to distinguish between what is and what ought to be (which in philosophy is called the distinction between the realm of being and the realm of obligation). The former is concerned with what in theology may be called the Determinative Will of God; the latter is concerned with the Preceptive Will of God. The Determinative Will of God includes causative and permissive aspects (what God determines to cause and what He determines to permit); the Preceptive Will of God includes everything addressed to man's obedience, whether expressed in commands (precepts), exhortations, teachings, or examples.

8. The decrees must be distinguished from their execution

The decree to create is not the act of creation. The decree to redeem is not the act of redemption. Thus we distinguish between what may be called the Decretive and the Executive phases of the Determinative Will of God, or the decrees of God as framed before the foundation of the world, and as executed in time space history.

9. The decrees are efficacious

This simply means that what God decreed will most certainly come to pass, that nothing can thwart His sovereign purpose. This thought