

is expressed in Isaiah 14:24, 27 -- "The Lord of hosts has sworn saying, 'Surely, just as I have intended so it has happened, and just as I have planned so it will stand, . . . For the Lord of hosts has planned, and who can frustrate It? And as for His stretched out hand, who can turn it back?' "

D. Objections to the Doctrine

Three major objections have been opposed to the doctrine as herein presented:

1. The decrees are destructive of man's free agency.

a. This objection states: "Man is a free agent with the power of rational self-determination. He can reflect upon, and in an intelligent way choose certain ends, and can also determine his action with respect to them. This we know by simple consciousness. But God's decrees predetermine whatever a man will do. Thus the decrees destroy free agency, and with it, human responsibility."

b. This objection may be responded to in the following ways:

- (1) God clearly predicts that human beings will act in certain ways, yet those persons are held responsible for their actions.
- (2) God foreknows as actual everything that comes to pass, yet certainty of futurity is not thereby destructive of free agency.
- (3) God's decrees cannot properly be said to cause everything that comes to pass.

Some events are indeed caused by God; others are simply guaranteed certainty of futurity. This emphasis distinguishes between the causative and the permissive aspects of God's Determinative Will.

In the causative aspect, God determines to cause; in the permissive aspect, He determines to permit. He determines to cause all morally good states or actions in personal beings; He determines to permit all morally evil states or actions in personal beings.

Of course, the difficulty in this distinction is that Aristotle's four classes of causality (formal cause, material cause, efficient cause, final cause) are insufficient to explain the difference between cause and permission as used in this context.

John Calvin, in his treatise, A Defense of the Secret Providence of God, attempted to distinguish between proximate and remote (or ultimate) causes of sinful actions and states. He identified the sinner as the proximate cause and God as the remote cause. But unless remote cause excludes responsibility, this distinction does not seem to be very helpful.