

**The 1689 Confession of Faith; Chapter 3, Paragraph 1 – “Of God’s Decree”,
Message # 1 – “God has Decreed in Himself”, Presented in the
Adult Sunday School Class by Pastor Paul Rendall,
on July 28th, 2021.**

Paragraph 1

“God hath decreed in himself, from all eternity, by the most wise and holy counsel of His own will, freely and unchangeably, all things, whatsoever comes to pass; yet so as thereby is God neither the author of sin nor hath fellowship with any therein; nor is violence offered to the will of the creature, nor yet is the liberty or contingency of second causes taken away, but rather established; in which appears his wisdom in disposing all things, and power and faithfulness in accomplishing his decree.”

1. What is a decree?

A. Answer – It is God’s plan, which He purposed before time began, in Himself.

It is His ordaining what, and in what way, all things shall come to pass.

Isaiah 46: 8-11 – “Remember this, and show yourselves men; recall to mind, O you transgressors.” “Remember the former things of old, for I am God, and there is no other I am God and there is none like Me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things that are not yet done, saying, ‘My counsel shall stand, and I will do all My pleasure, calling a bird of prey from the east, the man who executes My counsel, from a far country. “Indeed I have spoken it; I will also bring it to pass.” “I have purposed it; I will also do it.”

2nd Timothy 1: 8, 9 – “Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me His prisoner, but share with me in the sufferings for the gospel according to the power of God, who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began.”

The Shorter Catechism's Definition is - "The decrees of God are his eternal purpose, according to the counsel of his will, whereby, for his own glory, he hath foreordained whatsoever comes to pass. **Isaiah 14: 24-27**

B. His decrees are God acting within Himself. They are His Eternal Counsel within the 3 persons of the Godhead. Listen to John Brown of Haddington- “God acts on Himself in contemplating, loving and delighting in Himself; and in the persons of the Godhead knowing, loving, delighting in and consulting with one another.” “But few hints of this agency on himself, except in so far as it terminates on his creatures, are revealed to us in Scripture; and His execution of that plan in His works of Creation and Providence.”

Job 23: 13, 14 Isaiah 25: 1

C. It is His acting within Himself from all eternity.

Acts 15: 18 – “Known to God from eternity are all His works.”

Listen to Herman Bavinck in his book the Doctrine of God –

“Activity is an attribute of His being: he must needs work, he ever works. (John 5: 17 – My Father has been working until now, and I have been working) Accordingly, the work of creation does not mark the beginning of God’s activity, for He works from everlasting to everlasting. The personal properties which we studied in the foregoing chapter are eternal and immanent works of God. Eternally the Father gives to the Son, and with the Son to the Spirit, to have life in Himself. (John 5: 26) Furthermore, the communion of essence, existing between the three person is a life of absolute activity; the Father knows and loves the Son eternally, from before the foundation of the world, Matthew 11: 27, John 17: 24; and the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God, 1 Corinthians 2: 10.

All these divine works are immanent; they do not bear any relation to anything that has existence distinct from God; they pertain to the inner essence of the Divine Being, and they indicate the relations existing between the three persons. Nevertheless, they are of great importance to us, for they make God known unto us as a being independent and fully self-sufficient, who is not served by men’s hands as though he needed anything, seeing he himself giveth to all life, and breath and all things. (Acts 17: 25) God does not need the universe in order to be perfect; he does not need to create and to preserve in order not to be idle; in himself he is absolute activity.”

“From these purely immanent works of God we differentiate those which have reference to creatures which were to come into existence outside of God’s essence. Those works of God by means of which a relation is established between God and the creature are subdivided into “internal works” and “external works”. The name Decrees or “the eternal counsel of God” is usually applied to the internal works. These decrees establish a relationship between the distinctly immanent works of God and the transient or outgoing works of creation and redemption.

John Gill says in his body of Divinity- The immutability of God requires eternal decrees in Him, concerning everything that is in time; for if anything is done in time, that did not fall under His notice and will in eternity, this must be new to Him, and produce a change in Him; or if an after-will in time arises in Him, respecting anything he would have done, which He willed not before, this argues a change in Him; whereas, in Him there is no variation or shifting of shadow." Isaiah 42: 8, 9 and Isaiah 43: 13

2. His Decrees took place by "the most wise and holy counsel of his own will, freely and unchangeably. Proverbs 19: 21 Psalm 33: 10 and 11

A. How is God’s Decree named in the Scripture? Well, here it is called the “counsel” of his own will.