

- (4) Although God knows all things, He knows as actual only those things He has decided to actualize in His Plan. He does not know as actual, things that are only possible (although he knows them as possible).

e. The question of the "eternal Plan of God"

In the Westminster *Confession of Faith*, Chapter III, Section 1 we read:

God from all eternity did, by the most wise and holy counsel of his own will, freely and unchangeably ordain whatsoever comes to pass; yet so as thereby neither is God the author of sin, nor is violence offered to the will of the creatures, nor is the liberty or contingency of second causes taken away, but rather established.

This term "the eternal plan of God" or the phrase "from all eternity" is used in much of the literature.

A. A. Hodge, in his work, *The Confession of Faith* (1869) states:

God has had from eternity an unchangeable plan with reference to his creatures. As an infinitely intelligent Creator and providential Ruler, God must have had a definite purpose with reference to the being and destination of all that he has created, comprehending in one all-perfect system his chief end therein, and all subordinate ends and means in reference to that chief end. And since he is an eternal and unchangeable Being, his plan must have existed in all its elements, perfect and unchangeable, from eternity.

However, as soon as we begin speaking of an "eternal Plan", we run into some rather severe problems.

If God's Plan is eternal, and if God is eternal, then it follows that His Plan is as eternal as He is, and therefore that His Plan never had a beginning.

If God's Plan never had a beginning, but always was, then it would seem that it is in some sense necessary. If it was never formulated, never conceived, never brought into being, then it is difficult to see how it could be the product of a free determination by God, as a product of His thought and will.

And if God's Plan is necessary, then it would follow that various aspects of the Plan are also necessary. This would mean that creation was necessary, not the product of God's free self-determination. Then it would follow that redemption was necessary, not the product of God's gracious and loving and free decision.

But creation and redemption are not portrayed in Scripture as