

# An Apology for my choices

VOLUME 6

Sovereignty of God  
Free Will of Man

Predestination  
Election  
Foreknowledge



HIS STORY  
95 Theses

Answering Questions About Your Faith





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### why Apolo-

The word "apology" means to give an answer or defense for something.

Paul uses this word several times, most notably when he said...

"but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect,"

(1 Peter 3:15)



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An **Apolo-**

**About Choice**

Why is a proper understanding of God's  
Sovereignty and Man's Free Will Im-  
portant?

Whether we realize it or not, much of how we approach our



# An Apolo-



## Reformed Theology

**What is Reformed Theology?** By James Montgomery Boice (<http://www.reformedreader.org/t.u.l.i.p.htm>)

Reformed theology gets its name from the sixteenth century Protestant Reformation, with its distinct theological emphases, but it is theology solidly based on the Bible itself. Believers in the reformed tradition regard highly the specific contributions of such people as Martin Luther, John Knox, and particularly John Calvin, but they also find their strong distinctives in the giants of the faith before them, such as Anselm and Augustine, and ultimately in the letters of Paul and the teachings of Jesus Christ. Reformed Christians hold to the doctrines characteristic of all Christians, including the Trinity, the true deity and true humanity of Jesus Christ, the necessity of Jesus' atonement for sin, the church as a divinely ordained institution, the inspiration of the Bible, the requirement that Christians live moral lives, and the resurrection of the body. They hold other doctrines in common with evangelical Christians, such as justification by faith alone, the need for the new birth, the personal and visible return of Jesus Christ, and the Great Commission. What, then, is distinctive about reformed theology.

For most reformed people the chief and most distinctive article of the creed is God's sovereignty. Sovereignty means rule, and the sovereignty of God means that God rules over His creation with absolute power and authority. He determines what is going to happen, and it does happen. God is not alarmed, frustrated, or defeated by circumstances, by sin, or by the rebellion of His creatures.

Reformed theology emphasizes the doctrines of grace, best known by the acronym TULIP, though this does not correspond to the best possible names for the five doctrines.

**T stands for total depravity.** This does not mean that all persons are as bad as they could possibly be. It means rather that all human beings are affected by sin in every area of thought and conduct so that nothing that comes out of anyone apart from the regenerating grace of God can please God. As far as our relationships to God are concerned, we are all so ruined by sin that no one can properly understand either God or God's ways. Nor do we seek God, unless He is first at work within us to lead us to do so.

**U stands for unconditional election.** An emphasis on election bothers many people, but the problem they feel is not actually with election; it is with depravity. If sinners are as helpless in their depravity as the Bible says they are, unable to know and unwilling to seek God, then the only way they could possibly be saved is for God to take the initiative to change and save them. This is what election means. It is God choosing to save those who, apart from His sovereign choice and subsequent action, certainly would perish.

**L stands for limited atonement.** The name is potentially misleading, for it seems to suggest that reformed people want somehow to restrict the value of Christ's death. This is not the case. The value of Jesus' death is infinite. The question rather is what is the purpose of Christ's death, and what He accomplished in it. Did Christ intend to make salvation no more than possible? Or did He actually save those for whom He died? Reformed theology stresses that Jesus actually atoned for the sins of those the Father had chosen. He actually propitiated the wrath of God toward His people by taking their judgment upon Himself, actually redeemed them, and actually reconciled those specific persons to God. A better name for "limited" atonement would be "particular" or "specific" redemption.

**I stands for irresistible grace.** Left to ourselves we resist the grace of God. But when God works in our hearts, regenerating us and creating a renewed will within, then what was undesirable before becomes highly desirable, and we run to Jesus just as previously we ran away

from Him. Fallen sinners do resist God's grace, but His regenerating grace is effectual. It overcomes sin and accomplishes God's purpose.

**P stands for perseverance of the saints.** A better name might be "the perseverance of God with the saints," but both ideas are actually involved. God perseveres with us, keeping us from falling away, as we would certainly do if He were not with us. But because He perseveres we also persevere. In fact, perseverance is the ultimate proof of election. We persevere because God preserves us from full and final falling away from Him.

### **The Westminster Confession of Faith, Chapter 3 describes the Reformed position concerning Election**

1. 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.
2. Although God knows whatsoever may or can come to pass upon all supposed conditions, yet hath He not decreed any thing because He foresaw it as future, or as that which would come to pass upon such conditions.
3. By the decree of God, for the manifestation of His glory, some men and angels are predestinated unto everlasting life; and others foreordained to everlasting death.
4. These angels and men, thus predestinated, and foreordained, are particularly and unchangeably designed, and their number so certain and definite, that it cannot be either increased or diminished.
5. Those of mankind that are predestinated unto life, God, before the foundation of the world was laid, according to His eternal and immutable purpose, and the secret counsel and good pleasure of His will, hath chosen, in Christ, unto everlasting glory, out of His mere free grace and love, without any foresight of faith, or good works, or perseverance in either of them, or any other thing in the creature, as conditions, or causes moving Him thereunto: and all to the praise of His glorious grace.
6. As God hath appointed the elect unto glory, so hath He, by the eternal and most free purpose of His will, foreordained all the means thereunto. Wherefore, they who are elected, being fallen in Adam, are redeemed by Christ, are effectually called unto faith in Christ by His Spirit working in due season, are justified, adopted, sanctified, and kept by His power, through faith, unto salvation. Neither are any other redeemed by Christ, effectually called, justified, adopted, sanctified, and saved, but the elect only.
7. The rest of mankind God was pleased, according to the unsearchable counsel of His own will, whereby He extendeth or withholdeth mercy, as He pleaseth, for the glory of His sovereign power over His creatures, to pass by; and to ordain them to dishonour and wrath for their sin, to the praise of His glorious justice.
8. The doctrine of this high mystery of predestination is to be handled with special prudence and care, that men, attending the will of God revealed in His Word, and yielding obedience thereunto, may, from the certainty of their effectual vocation, be assured of their eternal election. So shall this doctrine afford matter of praise, reverence, and admiration of God; and of humility, diligence, and abundant consolation to all that sincerely obey the Gospel.

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## Arminian Theology

Arminianism is a system of belief that attempts to explain the relationship between God's sovereignty and mankind's free will, especially in relation to salvation. Arminianism was founded by Jacob Arminius (1560-1609), a Dutch theologian. While Calvinism emphasizes the sovereignty of God, Arminianism emphasizes the responsibility of man. If Arminianism is broken down into five points, similar to the five points of Calvinism, these would be the five points:

### **Free-Will or Human Ability**

Although human nature was seriously affected by the fall, man has not been left in a state of total spiritual helplessness. God graciously enables every sinner to repent and believe, but He does not interfere with man's freedom. Each sinner possesses a free will, and his eternal destiny depends on how he uses it. Man's freedom consists of his ability to choose good over evil in spiritual matters; his will is not enslaved to his sinful nature. The sinner has the power to either cooperate with God's Spirit and be regenerated or resist God's grace and perish. The lost sinner needs the Spirit's assistance, but he does not have to be regenerated by the Spirit before he can believe, for faith is man's act and precedes the new birth. Faith is the sinner's gift to God; it is man's contribution to salvation.

### **Conditional Election**

God's choice of certain individuals unto salvation before the foundation of the world was based upon His foreseeing that they would respond to His call. He selected only those whom He knew would of themselves freely believe the gospel. Election therefore was determined by or conditioned upon what man would do. The faith which God foresaw and upon which He based His choice was not given to the sinner by God (it was not created by the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit) but resulted solely from man's will. It was left entirely up to man as to who would believe and therefore as to who would be elected unto salvation. God chose those whom He knew would, of their own free will, choose Christ. Thus the sinner's choice of Christ, not God's choice of the sinner, is the ultimate cause of salvation.

### **Universal Redemption or General Atonement**

Christ's redeeming work made it possible for everyone to be saved but did not actually secure the salvation of anyone. Although Christ died for all men and for every man, only those who believe on Him are saved. His death enabled God to pardon sinners on the condition that they believe, but it did not actually put away anyone's sins. Christ's redemption becomes effective only if man chooses to accept it.

### **The Holy Spirit Can Be Effectually Resisted**

The Spirit calls inwardly all those who are called outwardly by the gospel invitation; He does all that He can to bring every sinner to salvation. But inasmuch as man is free, he can successfully resist the Spirit's call. The Spirit cannot regenerate the sinner until he believes; faith (which is man's contribution) proceeds and makes possible the new birth. Thus, man's free will limits the Spirit in the application of Christ's saving work. The Holy Spirit can only draw to Christ those who allow Him to have His way with them. Until the sinner responds, the Spirit cannot give life. God's grace, therefore, is not invincible; it can be, and often is, resisted and thwarted by man.

### **Falling from Grace**

Those who believe and are truly saved can lose their salvation by failing to keep up their faith, etc. All Arminians have not been agreed on this point; some have held that believers are eternally secure in Christ - that once a sinner is regenerated, he can never be lost.

(taken from *Romans: An Interpretive Outline*, by David N. Steele and Curtis Thomas, Baptist ministers in Little Rock, Arkansas, contrasts the Five Points of Calvinism with the Five Points of Arminianism in the clearest and most concise form found by Mr. Loraine Boettner)





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## Molinism

Molinism is generally attributed to the 16th century Jesuit, Luis de Molina. This system of thought seeks to explain and reconcile the sovereignty of God and the free will of man. At the heart of Molinism is that God is completely sovereign and that man is free in a libertarian sense. The Molinist is trying to avoid what he calls “theological fatalism” or the view that God decrees who will be saved apart from their free choice. Today’s most ardent defender of Molinism is William Lane Craig.

The most famous distinctive in Molinism is its affirmation that God has middle knowledge (*scientia media*). Molinism holds that God’s knowledge consists of three logical moments. These “moments” of knowledge are not to be thought of as chronological; rather, they are to be understood as “logical.” In other words, one moment does not come before another moment in time; instead, one moment is logically prior to the other moments. The Molinist differentiates between three different moments of knowledge which are respectively called natural knowledge, middle knowledge and free knowledge.

1. Natural Knowledge – This is God’s knowledge of all necessary and all possible truths. In this “moment” God knows every possible combination of causes and effects. He also knows all the truths of logic and all moral truths.
2. Middle Knowledge – This is God’s knowledge of what a free creature would do in any given circumstance. This knowledge is knowledge of what philosophers call counterfactuals.
3. Free Knowledge – This is God’s knowledge of what He decided to create. God’s free knowledge is His knowledge of the actual world as it is.



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Arminian Theology







