

# Acknowledgements

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After this, as indicated in the dedication for this third volume, I am thankful to the students at both the London School of Theology and the University of Notre Dame who have been formative in both the design and content of these volumes, and who have undoubtedly suffered from the results of all this research in lectures and assignments.

For this volume on early modern through to modern thought, which has not been my focus in historical theology, I am immensely grateful to have specialists who have agreed to read through particular chapters and provide constructively critical feedback. Many thanks therefore go to Tom, Jude, Kenny and Ben, and I hope that justice has been done to the relevant thinkers.

Spending extensive time with people from radically different contexts is always an honour, whether in communities of faith today or, as for this book, with writers from different historical periods in their particular contexts. They may not be able to read this, but I am thankful to and for Luis, Cornelius, Blaise, Jacobus, Jonathan, John and Karl, for the insights they provide for the church and the work they put into communicating these in the texts I have been reading.

Lastly, I am thankful beyond words for my family, for Ieva, Emily and Nicola, for the space they give me to work on a project like these three volumes, for the spaces, conversations and activities they give me to live life well away from my research, and for their love despite all my many failings and strange obsessions.

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# Introduction

The introduction to the first volume of this series began with a reflection on an occasion when I was declared an Arminian by a fellow student based on a minor comment I had made on the choices that we make. Finally, in this third volume we come to thinkers who would recognise the terminology of Calvinism and Arminianism in the final three chapters, after two and a half volumes of writers whose context involved other principles at work in their considerations of sin, grace and free will.

This third part of the project has certainly been the most challenging to compile and comes with apologies for the delays in its release to those few who have been desperate for the final instalment. The Covid pandemic was one element in this, affecting research patterns and increasing pastoral work for those closely engaged with students struggling through changing circumstances. Two other factors were also at work: one was the shift into the early modern and then modern period, which has not been easy for a medievalist, although I have come across all these writers before in the course of my studies and teaching. Greater than this was the figure of Luis de Molina, an essential subject as we shall see in that chapter, but only partially translated and notorious for the complexity of thought in the original Latin.

The choice of thinkers for this third volume was not an easy process. It is disappointing that there is no one from the nineteenth century in here, but none seemed to carry the weight of those who were selected. Barth was an obvious choice for the twentieth century, and others were considered, such as Gustavo Gutierrez. However, while the influence of Barth on the church and theology is becoming clear – whatever may happen to his thought in the future – the role of Liberation Theology still seems to be in process in both Catholic and Protestant thought.

Luis de Molina had to be included with the translation of part of his work by Professor Freddoso and Molina's increasing influence in

apologetics through the work of William Lane Craig. Arminius was an easy choice, though not an easy thinker to understand and present; Cornelius Jansen, through Blaise Pascal, is a necessary voice in the Catholic tradition on grace and free will, though probably an unfamiliar figure for most Protestant readers. John Wesley is another easy choice, but George Whitefield devotees will be sad that Jonathan Edwards carries the Calvinist voice from that period. The extent of Edwards' theological and philosophical writings carried the day in that choice.

This brings up one of the potential values of this series, and this volume in particular, which is the sheer number of pages that need to be read to identify what seem to be the key teachings on sin, grace and free will. The two major volumes compiling Edwards' works total around 5,000 pages and these do not contain his *Treatise on Grace*, for example, which is obviously a key source. That paled into relative insignificance when faced with the entirety of Barth's *Church Dogmatics*, with around 8,000 pages of close-cropped text in the editions used.

As for the other volumes in this series, this Reader is not intended to provide the final solution to the ideas of the thinkers, but to present key passages from the primary sources with an encouragement to follow up on those most interesting by going back to read these in their original context. The one exception to this would be the chapter on Molina, since only part four of his *Concordia* has been translated up to the time of publication.

That brings up the biggest difference in this volume from the previous two, with the second half dealing with sources not written in the traditional languages of theology – Greek and Latin – but in the vernacular of English and German. The fact that this shift occurred alongside Modernism and the Enlightenment, and therefore the growing influence of agnostic or atheistic philosophy developing its own anthropologies and at times reinterpreting theological terms, has some effects on the application particularly of sin and free will. Free will still tends not to be used by these writers as a term, except in Edwards' treatise on that matter.

With four of the thinkers being Protestants, there is another important shift in this volume. While Luther, Calvin and Zwingli in the previous volume left the Roman Catholic Church, they were all seeking primarily to be reformers of the Catholic faith, and Luther and Calvin, in particular, make great use of early and medieval voices to locate themselves in the historic tradition of the church. By the time of Arminius, the role of tradition has significantly changed, particularly regarding post-Augustinian thinkers, with new traditions of authority in the interpretation of Scripture being recognised. Barth does return to

medieval work, but rarely in deference to this as a tradition that has any kind of authority on the theology that he writes.

Given this cultural, denominational and methodological shift for some of the writers in this volume, it is perhaps surprising that there is not greater movement in our key themes. The nature of the human will and how it is 'free' is consistent (although Edwards' treatise is less clear than the principles towards this in his other works), that a truly free will does not sin and the choice to sin is not an evidence of freedom. Grace remains synonymous with the work of the Holy Spirit until the time of Barth when this suddenly changes and there are very few associations between the two there, grace being primarily related to election and to Christ. The nature and effects of sin likewise remain largely consistent until the time of Barth, although there are extensive discussions from different viewpoints in this volume of the agency of sinful humanity in relation to grace and the sovereignty of God.

As for the other volumes, my goal has been to attempt to keep my voice out of these presentations to allow access to the primary sources. I have been fortunate to have received feedback from some specialists on many of the chapters to gauge my success in this, but readers may still detect errors of understanding, of absence of material or undue stress. Perhaps in seeing these and working with both primary and secondary scholarship, greater clarity for the church can result from further publications.

These volumes form the textbooks for two courses that I teach: one on 'Sin, Grace and Free Will' for the University of Notre Dame; and one on 'Sin, Grace and Eschatology' for the London School of Theology. In teaching these alongside my research over the last fifteen years, I recognise the privilege of spending so much time with the thinkers through history, processing their thought in light of theological discussions with students today.

It is my hope that in the not-too-distant future I might publish a work that assesses all this learning as a contribution not solely pointing back to past voices, as these volumes have done, but considering the effect of their composite challenge to thinking on these issues today.