

Free Choice in Early Modern Reformed Theology

Dr. Michael J. Lynch, Instructor

Course Description

How is free choice possible in a world determined by God's will? What is the nature of human choice, and how does God's foreknowledge preserve man's moral responsibility? Although Christians today sometimes act like they are the first to raise such questions, we are heirs of a rich literature wrestling with these difficult questions. This class will focus on early modern Reformed expositions of free choice in their theological, philosophical, and historical contexts. Generally speaking, the course will cover the 16th–18th centuries, although classical and medieval treatments on the question of free choice will inevitably provide the background to much of the class material.

Course Format

The format of the course will be predominantly one of guided discussion. The instructor will often be doing most of the talking, but generally to illuminate and draw out themes from the text for discussion, rather than in straight-up lectures. Thus, students will be expected to come having read and engaged with the text selection for the week, and with thoughts prepared to contribute.

Classes will meet via Zoom for one hour each week and will be recorded for later viewing by students who cannot participate. Additional student participation and instructor interaction can take place on our private Davenant Commons discussion board.

Course Objectives

Objectives for this course include: (1) to discuss how early modern Reformed theologians understood human free choice; (2) to appreciate the ancient and medieval background to early modern discussion of human freedom (3) to explore how various theological doctrines, such as God's foreknowledge, relate to human free choice (4) to better understand some of the more influential early modern views on free choice associated with Molinism, *praemotio physica*, etc. (5) to examine early modern faculty psychology (6) to remark on the various scholastic distinctions at play in early modern expositions of human free choice.

Course Requirements

1. Weekly readings (due before our meeting each week).
2. Weekly interaction with fellow participants and the instructor in live class sessions.

Additional Recommended Course Elements:

1. Weekly submissions of reactions to/questions about the readings.
2. Participation on the course discussion board on Davenant Commons.

Course Texts

van Asselt, Willem J. J. Martin Bac. Roelf T. te Velde. eds. *Reformed Thought on Freedom: The Concept of Free Choice in Early Modern Reformed Theology*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2010.

Freddoso, Alfred J. "Preface," in Luis de Molina, *On Divine Foreknowledge* [...]. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1988. [To be provided.]

Muller, Richard A. "Aristotle and Aquinas on Necessity and Contingency," in Muller, *Divine Will and Human Choice: Freedom, Contingency, and Necessity in Early Modern Reformed Thought*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2017. [To be provided.]

Course Schedule

Week	Dates	Discussion Topics	Reading
1	6/1–7	Aristotle on Human Freedom	Muller: pgs. 83–110
2	6/8–14	Aquinas on Human Freedom	Muller: pgs. 110–138
3	6/15–21	Introduction to Early Modern Expositions of Free Choice	van Asselt: pgs. 15–49
4	6/22–28	Zanchi on Free Choice	van Asselt: pgs. 51–93
5	6/29–7/5	Junius on Free Choice	van Asselt: pgs. 95–125

6	7/6–12	Gomarus on Free Choice	van Asselt: pgs. 127–44
7	7/13–19	Voetius on Free Choice	van Asselt: pgs. 145–70
8	7/20–26	Turretin on Free Choice	van Asselt: pgs. 171–200
9	7/27–8/2	de Moor on Free Choice	van Asselt: pgs. 201–29
10	8/3–8/9	Dominicans, Jesuits, and Conclusion	Freddoso: 1–81 (esp. 24–28) van Asselt: pgs. 231–42