

## Moral Government & Open Theism Vindicated

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This is a public response to "Apologetics Index" on their page on Moral Government Theology. I hope I can clear up any concerns people might have.

<http://www.apologeticsindex.org/m05.html>

**Quote: "Moral Government theology teaches that:"**

**Quote: "God does not fulfill some of His own prophecies."**

**Answer:** This is an open theist view, not a moral government view. And this is precisely what God says about Himself: Ezekiel 33:13-18, Jeremiah 18:7-10. God said that He will not do what He "said" He would do to the wicked, if the wicked turn from their wickedness.

Examples would be:

God told Hezekiah through Isaiah that he would die and not live, but then changed His mind and added 15 years.

God told Nineveh through Jonah that they would be destroyed in forty days, but then they repented and so God changed His mind.

See: 2Ki 20:6, Isa 38:5, Jonah 3:10

**Quote: "God changes His mind and is not immutable"**

**Answer:** This is open theism, not moral government.

God's nature is immutable, but God has changed His mind in the bible:

See Genesis 6:5-6, Exodus 32:14, Judges 2:18, 1Samual 15:35, 2Samuel 24:16, 1Chronicals 21:15, Ezekiel 33:13-18, Jeremiah 18:7-10, Jeremiah 26:19, Amos 7:3-6, Jonah 3:10.

**Quote: "God does not have sovereign control over earthly events."**

**Answer:** This is confusing God's providential government, natural government, and moral government.

God's Providential Government:

God sovereignty controls history, sometimes through cause and effect (law of necessity), sometimes through influence and response (law of liberty). God at times has takes away

man's free will to cause things.

See Jeremiah 17:4 and Revelations 17:17

God's Natural Government:

God's sovereignty controls all of nature through the law of cause and effect, or the law of necessity.

See Matthew 8:27, Luke 8:25

God's Moral Government:

God's sovereignty assigned the law of liberty, or influence and response, to this branch of government. That is, God does not force anyone to be saved or to be holy, it is their voluntary choice.

See De 30:15, De 30:19, Jer 21:8, John 5:40, Luke 19:14, Luke 19:27, Matt 23:37, Rev 2:21, Rev 3:20

**Quote: "God does not know His future actions."**

**Answer:** This again is open theism, not moral government.

God has eternal plans that He will ultimately bring to pass.

Isaiah 46 says God declares his plans for the end from the very beginning, saying that He will do His good counsel.

But because man's will is free, that is contingent; there are many possibilities in between the end and the beginning. God knows full well all of the future possibilities, and knows how He would respond to all of them.

**Quote: "God does not know ahead of time the free decisions of humans."**

**Answer:** This is open theism, not moral government.

God is omniscience. That is, God knows all that there is to know. God knows all objects of knowledge.

If there are free choices then they are contingent choices, and if they are contingent then they are not certain, and if they are not certain then they are not knowable as certain. Therefore, a free action is not an object of certain knowledge until it is certainly committed. But God foreknows possibility actions as possible. God knows all of reality as it is.

That would explain the following: Genesis 6:5-6, Exodus 32:14, Judges 2:18, 1Samual 15:35, 2Samuel 24:16, 1Chronicals 21:15, Jeremiah 26:19, Amos 7:3-6, Jonah 3:10

**Quote: "God's foreknowledge is limited in the area of man's free decisions."**

**Answer:** This is open theism, not moral government.

God's foreknowledge is limited to all objects of knowledge. Does God know that I own a 12 year old monkey? No He doesn't. Does that take away from God's omniscience? No, because I do not own a 12 year old monkey, and God knows that I do not. So knowledge is naturally limited to all objects of knowledge, and what is uncertain or what is contingent cannot be an object of knowledge.

See above.

**Quote: "Many of the things God predicted never came true."**

**Answer:** I disagree with this. The only unfulfilled prophecies that I can think of is the prophecy that Hezekiah would die and not live, and that Nineveh would be overthrown in exactly 40 days.

But God changed His mind, and thus fulfilled the scriptures where He said He would change His mind, namely, Ezekiel 33:13-18, Jeremiah 18:7-10.

**Quote: "The atonement shows a willingness on God's part to forgive, rather than a desire to punish sin."**

**Answer:** John 3:16, God so loved the world He gave His son. God's disposition before the atonement was that of love and a willingness to forgive. Ps 86:5 - For thou, Lord, art good, and ready to forgive; and plenteous in mercy unto all them that call upon thee.

God has always been ready to forgive. The atonement did not change God's disposition, from wanting to punish sin to wanting to pardon sin, but the atonement made it possible for God to justly pardon unpaid debt, Romans 3:24-26, so that God could justly set aside our punishment (Heb 9:22) which punishment is hellfire (2Thes 1:9).

The atonement shows the severity of God and also the mercy of God.

**Quote: "God forgives completely out of His grace rather than a need for personal vindictive satisfaction."**

**Answer:** We are not saved by the law, but by grace. The foundation of our forgiveness is not the fulfillment of the law, but because of God's grace.

We are not saved because the letter of the law was fulfilled, but because God out of His grace and mercy put aside the execution of the penalty because the atonement fulfilled the spirit of the law.

Neither are we justified because the righteousness of Christ is imputed to us. That would be justification by the law. But we are justified by God's grace and mercy, that is, we are simply forgiven by God's grace and mercy, which was made possible by Christ.

See Ephesians 2:8-9.

**Quote: "God never needed His wrath abated because of sin."**

**Answer:** Public justice demands that God punish sin, but also allows for God to pardon debt when it is safe for Him to do so – Ezekiel 18:32, Ezekiel 33:11, 2Peter 3:9. God is capable of setting aside His wrath for sin when a blood atonement is made for sin (Numbers 16:48, Heb 9:22)

Examples of God pardoning unpaid debt: Matt 6:12, Matt 18:27, Luke 7:42

**Quote: "The atonement does not pay our debt for sin."**

**Answer:** The atonement makes it possible for God to justly forgive (Romans 3:24-26) our unpaid debt (Matt 6:12, Matt 18:27, Luke 7:42). God can forgive unpaid debt (eternal hell-fire, 2Thes 1:9) when there is the fulfillment of blood shed (the cross, Heb 9:22)

Heb 9:22 "without shedding of blood is no remission." God could not forgive our sin, or pardon our unpaid debts, without the shedding of blood. But when there is blood shed to substitute our punishment, God is able to set aside our punishment of hell fire.

The atonement was not the payment of our debt, but makes it possible for God to forgive our unpaid debts. Grace forgives debt; it does not require the payment of debt.

Mt 18:27 - Then the lord of that servant was moved with compassion, and loosed him, and forgave him the debt.

Mt 6:12 - And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.

Lu 7:42 - And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me therefore, which of them will love him most?

1Jo 1:9 - If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins

**Quote: "The devil has deceived us into believing that Christ was a ransom for us, and that he redeemed us by paying for our sins."**

**Answer:** Christ was a ransom for us:

Mt 20:28 - Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.

Mr 10:45 - For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.

1Ti 2:6 - Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.

But this ransom was not for the elect only, but for all. And this ransom was not the payment of our debt, but an arrangement which made the forgiveness of our debt, the pardon of our sins, possible upon conditions of repentance and faith.

Christ did pay a price for our sins:

1Co 7:23 - Ye are bought with a price

2Pe 2:1 - denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction.

Christ paid a price for our sins (his blood) but did not pay the penalty of our sins (eternal hell fire). His payment did not make salvation automatic and unconditional, but allowed for our forgiveness to be conditional to all.

**Quote: "Jesus did not pay for our sins."**

**Answer:** See above. Jesus paid the price of his blood for the forgiveness of the sins of the whole world. He did not pay the penalty for our sins (eternal hell-fire), but paid a price (his blood) which makes forgiveness possible to all.

**Quote: "To believe that our salvation was literally purchased with Christ's blood makes God to be vindictive and bloodthirsty."**

**Answer:** Christ literally bought the salvation of all men, that is, He made salvation possible for all by shedding His blood.

But to represent God as demanding the penalty of sin (eternal hell-fire), instead of pardoning our debt and forgiving our sin, even when there has been a blood atonement, makes God unmerciful and unforgiving. God forgives us our sins and pardons our debt when there is blood atonement.

**Quote: "One is ultimately responsible for his/her own salvation because of free will."**

**Answer:** The ultimate ground for our salvation is the grace and mercy of Christ, Ephesians 2:8-9.

But the conditions of our salvation was:

1. The blood atonement (Heb 9:22)

2. Repentance (Ezekiel 18:32, Ezekiel 33:11, Luke 13:3, 2Peter 3:9)
3. Faith (John 3:16-18, Romans 3:22)

God wants everyone to be saved. But nobody will be saved against their will. God cannot force anyone to love him. Love must come from the heart.

Man must willingly come: De 30:15, De 30:19, Jer 21:8, John 5:40, Luke 19:14, Luke 19:27, Matt 23:37, Rom 6:17, Rev 2:21, Rev 3:20 etc

**Quote: "Imputed righteousness is a lie. God does not look on Christians through the garb of Christ's blood."**

**Answer:** Romans chapter 4, especially 4:11 says that our own faith is imputed to us for righteousness. Biblical imputed righteousness, according to Romans 4, is synonymous with covering, reckoning, and forgiving. God forgives us all of our past sins, but is not blind of our present and future sins. Imputed righteousness is when a person is reckoned righteous or considered righteous, but not when the righteousness of another is transferred to their account. The bible never says Christ's righteousness is transferred to us, but that our own faith is imputed or accounted to us for righteousness.

What did God say to the Churches in Revelations? Did God say, "I see the righteousness of Christ"??? No!!!! He said, "I see your works" and "repent!"

**Quote: "True repentance means ceasing from all sin before we die."**

**Answer:** Repentance is when a person changes their mind about sinning, when a person makes up their mind not to sin anymore.

#### SCRIPTURE WORDS THAT DESCRIBE REPENTANCE:

##### A. Old Testament Words

1. TO REPENT (naw-kham) - to sign, pant, groan, to breath strongly, to be sorry, to grieve, to lament, to regret, to suffer remorse.

This is translated about 40 times in which 33 times it refers to the actions of God in an aroused state of emotion (as Gen 6:6-7, Ex 32:12, Ex 32:14, 1Sam 15:11, 1Sam 15:35, Jer 18:8, Jer 18:8, Jonah 3:9-10, Jonah 4:2) Sometimes it it used in the sense of man (Ex 13:17, Jude 21:6, Job 42:6, Jer 8:6, Jer 31:19)

2. TO TURN (shoob) - to turn about, to return, to turn back, to be converted, to turn one's self to a person or thing, to have a radical change in one's attitude towards God and sin, with a complete turn to righteousness. It is used many times concerning God's actions (Ps 90:13). Examples concerning man turning from sin are: Deu 4:30-31, 1Sam 7:3, 2Chron 6:24-25, 2Chron6:37-39, Neh 1:9, Isah 55:7, Jer 3:12-14, Jer 18:8, Hos 14:1-2, Jonah 3:8, Jonah 3:10, Zech 1:3-4, Mal 3:7, Eze 14:6, Eze 18:30-32

## B. New Testament Words Commonly Used:

1. To REPENT (metano'e'o) - To change one's mind or purpose, to undergo a change in mind and feeling, to make a change in principle and practice, to reform, equivalent to the Old Testament word "turn" derived from "meta" expressing the idea of change, and "noeo" to think, understand, conceive, apprehend. Some usages are: Mark 1:15, Mark 6:12, Luke 13:3, Luke 13:5, Luke 15:7, Luke 15:10, Acts 2:3, Acts 3:19, Acts 17:30-31, Acts 26:20, Rev 2:5, Rev 2:16, Rev 2:22, Rev 3:3, Rev 3:19

2. REPENTANCE (me anoya) - A change of mind, purpose, or mode of thought and feeling, the noun form from above verb: from "meta" and "noya", which is from "nous", the intellect, mind, or understanding in thought, feeling, and will. Some usages are: Luke 13:3, Luke 3:8, Luke 5:32, Luke 24:47, Acts 5:31, Acts 11:18, Acts 20:21, Acts 26:20, Rom 2:4, 2Cor 7:9, 2Cor 7:10, 2Pet 3:9

3. TO TURN ABOUT (epistre'pho) - to turn back, around, towards, to return, to convert, to turn one's self about or around, from "epi", upon, also used for emphasis, and "strephe", to turn or change (used in Matt 18:3). See the following usages: Matt 13:15, Luke 22:32, Acts 3:19, Acts 9:35, Acts 11:21, Acts 14:15, Acts 15:19, Acts 26:18, Acts 26:10, 1Thes 1:9, James 5:19-20, 1Pet 2:25. The noun form appears only in Acts 15:3. A kindred verb, "apostre'pho", to turn away, appears in Acts 3:26.

Nowhere in the entire Old or New Testament does repentance leave room for anything but a radical change, or complete turn from all sin, in returning back to God.

**Quote: "Salvation is not so dependent on whether we accept Christ - it's whether He will accept us. We need to do more so that He will want to accept us."**

**Answer:** Because we have free-will, we do need to accept Christ (John 1:12). But God will not accept us unless there is blood shed (Heb 9:22), repentance (Luke 13:3), and faith (John 3:18). But once there is blood shed, repentance, and faith, God will freely forgive us by His grace and mercy (Eph 2:8-9)

**Quote: "Salvation is dependent upon our adherence to moral law."**

**Answer:** Salvation is conditional upon repentance and faith. One must turn from all known sin to be forgiven.

"Unless you repent, you will all likewise perish" Luke 13:3

"He became the author of eternal salvation to all them that obey him" Heb 5:9

"For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified." Romans 2:13

"believe unto righteousness" Romans 10:10

"faith without works is dead" James 2:20

"Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only." Jas 2:24

**Quote: "God is holy only because He chooses to use His attributes in a loving way. God has the ability to make wrong choices or to sin."**

**Answer:** "God is light" 1John 1:5 - This respects His perfect knowledge

"God is Spirit" John 4:24 - This respects His spiritual essence.

"God is love" 1John 4:8 - This respects His moral character, or His voluntary and willful choices.

What is virtue, or what is moral, must be voluntary and willful. What is forced or causes cannot have any virtue in it. There is no moral character in skin color because it is not voluntary. Moral character is derived from voluntary choices.

God has a free-will, and voluntarily chooses to submit His will to His intelligence, to be voluntarily benevolent. Because God has a freewill, and a conscience or intelligence, God is capable of sinning, that is, God is capable of using His freewill to act contrary to His intelligence, but God is Holy and Good because He never does that.

**Quote: "Our moral character is shaped merely by our individual acts of sin."**

**Answer:** Your moral character is as your inward intention is, not merely as your outward action is.

Criminality, or guilt, is prescribed solely to the inward intention of the heart, or to the purpose or motive of the will, and does not consist solely in the outward actions. God is not at all described in the scriptures as being impressed with outward actions, but rather as looking upon and judging the motives and intentions of the heart. Gen 6:5, 1Sam 16:7, Joel 2:12-14, Matt 5:8, Matt 6:1-5, Matt 12:35, Matt 15:11, Matt 15:17-20, Matt 23:25-28, Mark 7:15-23, Luke 10:27, Hebrews 4:12, 1Tim 1:5, Titus 1:15

The intention and motive is what God is concerned about. You are as your intention is. The intention for adultery is adultery (Matthew 5:28), the intention for murder is murder (1John 3:15). A man is as guilty as his intention is. Moral character, or the quality of a person's moral state, consists in the moral condition of their inward intention, being either that of criminality or rectitude.

The Pharisees appeared "outwardly righteous" but were "inwardly full of iniquity" (Matt 23:28) because they fasted and prayed to be seen of men. (Matt 6:5, Matt 23:5). They

were as their inward motive was, not as their outward works were. They were not even in the least bit righteous, but were full of iniquity; because what they did, they did selfishly and not benevolently; they did it for themselves and not for God and others; and virtue consists solely in benevolence of heart while sin consists solely in selfishness of heart.

When the inward intention is morally wrong (selfish), the outward action which follows from it, no matter what sort it is (even praying and fasting), does not grant any moral character to the moral agent except from its relation to the individual's motive. And where the intention is morally right (benevolent), there can be no moral guilt (1Cor 6:12, 1Cor 10:23, Titus 1:15), since guilt is prescribed solely to a wrong (selfish) intention.

**Quote: "If an individual unknowingly commits a sin, it is not a sin to that person and they will not be held to account for it by God."**

**Answer:** "Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and does it not, to him it is sin."  
James 4:17

Sin is rebellion against what a person knows they should do. Obedience and disobedience both require knowledge. And we are only accountable for our voluntary, knowledgeable choices.

If a man sins a "sin of ignorance" (Lev 4:13), doing that which "ought not to be done" (Lev 4:2) "when he knows of it" only "then he shall be guilty" (Lev 5:3), being held responsible only when it is "known". (Lev 4:14)

The measure of judgment is the measure of knowledge:

"Woe unto thee, Chorazin! Woe unto thee, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works, which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I say unto you, it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment, than for you." Matthew 11:21-22

"And that servant, which knew his Lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he that knew not, and did not commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall much be required" Luke 12:47-48

"Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." Luke 23:34

"Jesus said unto them, if ye were blind, ye would have no sin: but now ye say, We see; therefore your sin remains." John 9:41

"If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin." John 15:22

"Where no law is, there is no transgression." Romans 4:15

"Sin is not imputed when there is no law." Romans 5:13

“To him who knows to do good, and does it not, to him it is sin.” James 4:17

Some sinners have a “greater sin” John 19:11

Hypocrites (who all know better) will have a greater d\*\*nation: Matt 23:14, Mark 12:40, Luke 20:47

Teachers (who by necessity know more) are accountable to a stricter judgment: James 3:1

See also: Matt 10:15, Matt 11:24, Mark 6:11, Luke 10:12, Luke 10:14, Heb 10:26, 2Peter 2:21

**Quote: "The sin of Adam is not transmitted to us, and it would be unjust for God to pronounce us guilty because of his sin."**

**Answer:** “The fathers shall not be put to death for the children, neither shall the children be put to death for the fathers: every man shall be put to death for his own sin.” Deuteronomy 24:16

“The Lord commanded, saying, the fathers shall not be put to death for the children, nor the children be put to death for the fathers; but everyman shall be put to death for his own sin.” 2Kings 14:6

“The Lord commanded, saying, the fathers shall not die for the children, neither shall the children die for the fathers, but everyman shall die for his own sin.” 2Chronicals 25:4

“Yet say ye, why? Doeth not the son bear the iniquity of the father? When the son hath done that which is lawful and right, and hath kept all of my statutes, and hath done them, he shall surely live. The soul that sins, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father; neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him.” Ezekiel 18:19-20

“God hath made man upright, but they have sought out many inventions” Ecclesiastes 7:29

“Who will render to everyman according to his deeds.” Romans 2:6

“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that everyone may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, weather it be good or bad.” 2Corinthians 5:10

**Quote: "If God condemns us all because of Adam's sin, God must also save everyone because of what Christ did (Rom. 5:19). This is universalism, and therefore both parts of the argument must be wrong."**

**Answer:** To interpret Romans 5 as automatic and unconditional when it says "judgment came upon all to condemnation" there is no reason to apply the next sentence "justification came upon all men to salvation" a different way. But both condemnation and justification depend upon our own personal choices. Adam makes men sinners upon condition of their freewill choice to rebel and Christ makes men sinners upon condition of their freewill choice to convert.

**Quote: "Our moral depravity is shaped solely by wrong and sinful choices we make."**

**Answer:** We inherit physical depravity from our parents, because what is physical is hereditary - "As in Adam all die" 1Corinthians 15:22 and "death reigned from Adam" Romans 5:14

But moral depravity is determined by your own personal will, that is, by your own personal heart: Mt 15:19, Mr 7:21

**Quote: "We as humans are able to fulfill the law."**

**Answer:** "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind" (Matt 22:37) and "love thy neighbor as thyself" (Matt 22:39). The moral law of God in essence is the law of love, love being the total and complete fulfillment of the whole of the law. (Rom 13:8, Rom 13:10, Gal 5:14, Jas 2:8)

We are commanded to love "with all thy". Therefore, what is commanded does not exceed the ability that we already have, not the faculties that we already possess.

"There has no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able, but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it." 1Cor 10:13

"God is faithful" therefore "ye are able" (1Cor 10:13). "Able" is "δύναμαι" which is to "be able or possible: - be able, can (do, + -not), could, may, might, be possible, be of power". The only reason "ye are able" is because "God is faithful". To declare that "ye are not able" would require the declaration that "God is not faithful". God's character determines what God commands; and what God commands is always in accordance to our ability; the moral law always respecting our ability by brilliantly declaring "with all thy" (Matthew 22:37).

"My yoke is easy, and my burden is light." (Matt 11:30). "His commandments are not grievous." (1John 5:3). Because His yoke, burden, and commandments are easy, light, and not grievous, therefore "ye are able". To say "ye are not able" is to say His yoke, burden, and commandments are hard, heavy and burdensome, which would be contrary to the direct and explicit declarations God has given of Himself. The one who misrepresents the commandments must of necessity misrepresent the Commander.

**Quote: "Humans are not bound to a sinful flesh that continually wants to sin."**

**Answer:** We have a fallen constitution or fallen body, which serves as a strong temptation towards self-gratification. The lusts of the flesh are temptations (James 1:14) but not causations.

We are capable of yielding our constitution to be an instrument of righteousness or an instrument of unrighteousness:

Ro 6:13 - Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God.

Ro 6:19 - I speak after the manner of men because of the infirmity of your flesh: for as ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity; even so now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness.

**Quote: "Through good choices and an iron will, mankind can turn away from sin in and of him/herself."**

**Answer:** We are completely dependant upon the convicting, teaching, enlightening, and strengthening of the Spirit of truth. We need the Spirit to instruct us as to how we are to use our free-will, and we need the Spirit of God to strengthen or encourage our free-will.

See: John 16:8, Acts 24:25, Acts 6:10, 1Corinthians 2:10, Galatians 3:24, Ephesians 3:16, Titus 2:11-12

**Quote: "One can achieve perfection if that individual sets his/her goals high enough."**

**Answer:** Through Jesus Christ, and the leading of the Holy Spirit, we can be perfect, righteous, blameless, and without fault, in this present world. That is, we can be made perfected in love.

See: Matt 5:48, 1John 4:17, Titus 2:11-12