

# The Arminian

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# RICHARD WATSON: METHODISM'S FIRST SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGIAN

Barry W. Hamilton

After the death of John Wesley in 1791, a new generation of leaders rose to prominence in the Wesleyan Methodist Church in England, figures that included Adam Clarke, Thomas Coke, Samuel Bradburn and Jabez Bunting. During this time, Anglican antagonists attacked Methodism from pulpits and in pamphlets. Amidst a throng of Wesleyan heroes came Richard Watson, a gifted preacher and author who defended Methodism against her enemies. Over the course of his lifetime,

he made innumerable contributions to the young denomination and helped lead her through a tumultuous period known as Middle Methodism.

Born in humble circumstances in Barton-upon-Humber in 1783, Watson did not immediately show promise as a church leader. Yet in time he became converted and sensed a call to preach. But his opportunities were limited, for his parents had apprenticed him as a furniture-maker. After he began to travel at around fifteen years of age, Watson served three or four circuits until he transferred to the Methodist New Connection. His habit of debating theology in front of rustic congregations backfired when village gossip branded him a heretic, and the young preacher found himself locked out of his charge. The bitter taste of failure lingered throughout his adult life and may have motivated him to achievement as salve for his wounds.

In his early adulthood, Watson developed an extraordinary talent for persuasive speaking. At first sight some churches judged him a mere boy, yet his pulpit skill carried the impression of divine unction. A precocious young man, Watson also displayed remarkable writing talents, particularly when debating theology and mustering British patriotism. Finding himself constricted in the New Connexion, Watson thought of returning to the Wesleyan Methodist Church; however, he knew some of his former colleagues had branded him disloyal. His

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opportunity appeared on a road near Manchester in 1811. He made a chance acquaintance with another young preacher returning home from his appointed station. This meeting became a turning point in the careers of both men.

This friendship became the catalyst that thrust Richard Watson into the top ranks of leadership. For his new friend was Jabez Bunting, the youngest person ever elected to the Legal Hundred and eventually the most influential leader in the Wesleyan Methodist Church. Bunting and Watson developed a symbiotic relationship: Watson needed a sponsor and protector to vindicate him from his youthful error and provide outlets for his extensive talents. Bunting was a strong-armed administrator who could effectively run an organization. But he needed a theologian as partner, a pulpit giant who could move congregations, a vision-

ary promoter of missions, and an able defender of Methodist doctrine and practice. A keen observer, he knew he had met the right person on that road home. As one contemporary

observed, Bunting never failed to provide opportunities and Watson was never slow to take them.

These two young men rose to the highest ranks of leadership in the Wesleyan Methodist Church, and their enemies assailed them even beyond their deaths. Yet Bunting and Watson made immense contributions to Methodism's legacy. Both served terms in the Conference President's chair; Watson wrote the constitution of the Wesleyan Missionary Society and served as its general secretary in its earliest years; he was particularly noteworthy at casting a vision for Methodist missions and raising funds for their extension; he kept up an extensive correspondence with missionaries and advocated for their preparatory education; Watson distinguished himself as a master preacher and at his death in 1833 was named the "Chrysostom" of Wesley-

an Methodism; he wrote several able defenses of Methodism, including a response to Robert Southey's unflattering biography of John Wesley; worked tirelessly for the emancipation and education of West Indian slaves; defended the doctrine of Jesus Christ as the Eternal Son of God against Adam Clarke's opinion that Jesus Christ became Son of God at his baptism (this might have encouraged young, unsophisticated preachers to regard Jesus the Son as less than the Father); and contributed monumentally to Methodist theological education, especially with the publication of his *Theological Institutes*.

Published in three parts between 1821 and 1829, the *Institutes* became a high-water mark for Methodist literature and a magisterial exposition of the doctrines of the English Reformation. Through their pages Watson set forth his version of what defined Methodism: the restoration of the New Testament gospel that the Reformers had intended but not completed. The *Institutes* sought to expound the doctrines of the Bible, the restored gospel brought to light in the Reformation. They were permeated by a deep loyalty to the British Crown and Constitution, and a conservative view of English society that included a ruling class of "bettered." This helped deflect any suspicion that the Methodists were closet revolutionaries who wanted to bring the French Revolution to England. The *Institutes* became a staple of Methodist ministers' libraries, including those who joined the Holiness Movement of the nineteenth century.

Today among people of the Wesleyan-Holiness tradition, the name of Richard Watson is scarcely remembered. Even the leaders of Wesleyan denominations rarely recognize the *Theological Institutes* as Methodism's first systematic theology textbook. Yet these obscure works educated several generations of ministers who transmitted its message of "holiness of heart and life." To Richard Watson and other spiritual giants like him, heirs of the Wesleyan heritage owe an enormous debt of gratitude.

Editor's note: See my review of Dr. Hamilton's major new work on Richard Watson in *The Arminian Magazine* 2015.

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**Even the leaders of Wesleyan denominations rarely recognize the Theological Institutes as Methodism's first systematic theology textbook.**

# Franciscus Gomarus: Arminius' Adamant Adversary

John S. Knox

Many historical, political, and theological factors surrounded Jacobus Arminius and his *Declaration of Sentiments*. Arminius lived during a period of social complexity that clearly influenced both the motivation and transmission of his theological presentations. Yet, just as a drama or play is more than the props or the stage setup, so, too, is the situation concerning Arminius greater than mere historical or cultural matters alone.

Thus, a proper investigation of Arminius and his theological assertions should include a review of the persons involved in Arminius'

life and times (both positively and negatively) in order to aid in a deeper analysis of Arminius and his work — people that Arminius alluded to or specifically named

in the *Declaration* who either supported his position or whom he claimed had an incorrect understanding of doctrine and Calvinism.

It would be impossible, of course, to investigate every influential individual in Arminius' life, but one can highlight the people with a vested, personal interest in the *Declaration* in order to

show the defining factors between Arminius and the Supralapsarians. One such person was Dutch Reformed pastor and Calvinist professor at Leiden, Franciscus Gomarus.

## Franciscus Gomarus: Life and Mission

Born in Bruges, Flanders, one year before Jean Calvin's death (1563), Franciscus Gomarus and his siblings grew up with parents that followed Reformed thought. A precocious lad, Franciscus pursued a classical education wherein he began his studies of theology, philosophy, rhetoric, and the law.

Like many other Protestants of the time, in 1577, the Gomarus family was forced to flee eastward to Germany because of extremist Catholic and Lutheran oppression. In Strasbourg, Germany, Franciscus began his classical studies under staunch Calvinists like Johann Sturm, German educator and advisor (1507-1589).

When more religious persecution and oppressive measures were instituted, Franciscus moved again to Neustadt, where he received tutelage from Supralapsarian professors Zacharias Ursinus (formerly at the University of Heidelberg) and Hieronymus Zanchius (at the

## Gomarus wanted Arminius and his theology to be rejected once and for all, but his attack had backfired.

## Wesley Stories

Joseph Beaumont Wakeley

Mr. Wesley was a great redeemer of time, and was always pained at the loss of a moment, as the following anecdote, related by Dr. Adam Clarke will show:

In 1785, with Joseph Bradford, he visited Dr. Clarke on St. Austell Circuit. Says the Doctor: "I was with Mr. Wesley one day when his chaise was not at the door at the time he had ordered it. He set off on foot, and I accompanied him. It was not long, however, before Joseph Bradford overtook us with it. Mr. Wesley inquired, 'Joseph, what has been the matter?'

"Bradford explained, 'I could not get things ready any sooner, sir.' Wesley replied, 'You should have urged the people to it.' Bradford explained, 'I spoke to them to be in readiness, sir, no less than *nineteen* times.'

"Mr. Wesley pleasantly remarked, 'You lost it, you blockhead, for the want of the *twentieth*,' thus giving Joseph and his young friend a gentle hint on punctuality and perseverance."

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Casmirianum Academy). In 1582, he traveled to England, taking some courses at Oxford University, but he finally graduated in 1584 from the University of Cambridge. He received his doctoral degree from the University of Heidelberg in 1594.

Based on available historical evidence, it is safe to say that Franciscus Gomarus was Arminius' chief theological rival. From the moment Arminius considered joining the faculty at the University of Leyden, Gomarus seemed to make it his responsibility to prevent Arminius from teaching there and from spreading his brand of theology. He felt Arminius should not be in that position of influence in the theological sphere because his theology was "too Pelagian."

In no uncertain terms, Gomarus let the governors know he did not want Arminius appointed; however, after Arminius had been hired over the objections of Gomarus, the latter then doggedly criticized, confronted, and debated with Arminius every chance that he could. He became essentially what church historian Carl O. Bangs calls an "agent of hostility to Arminius." Observing the active aggression of Gomarus, it is easy to conclude that he was simply a bitter man; however, many would disagree with this hasty conclusion.

In *Portraits of Faithful Saints*, Herman Hanko sees Gomarus as a man who was a "staunch defender of the faith" and one who "stood for the truth"; however, many thought Gomarus to be "obnoxious at times and barely tolerable." Either way, Arminius avoided the conflict when he could; but eight years later, he finally stood against Gomarus in front of the Assembly to determine if his *Declaration* or Gomarus' position was correct.

Just as Arminius had provided a full and detailed explanation of the realities and biblical foundation of predestination and freedom of human will, Gomarus presented a thirty-two-part treatise on proper Reformed doctrine entitled, "Of God's Predestination." Perhaps he hoped to sway his audience with a tidal wave of evidence to refute a substantial foe. As Hanko states, "His opponent, Jacobus Arminius, popular with students and ministers, gracious, kind, tolerant,

filled with concern for friend and foe alike, presents quite a contrast. But Arminius was the heretic, and Gomarus stood for the truth."

In his response to Arminius' defense of his theology, Gomarus clearly states in Chapter XIII,

Therefore, also, the object of predestination to its own ends – to speak accurately and without prolepsis (which, when used in this argument, begets obscurity) – are rational creatures, not as actually about to be saved or lost, to be created, about to fall or stand fast, or about to be restored; but, so far as remote and indefinite ability goes, savable, damnable, creable [creatable], liable to fall, restorable. And that is proved, beyond controversy, by the nature and order of the object and of the cause both efficient and final. For the object, in the order of nature, precedes the operation of the power attached to it and occupied about it, and therefore also the object of predestination precedes predestination itself; nay, and exceeds it in extent also, as we have shown (in Thesis X): but being about to be saved, to be created, to fall, to be restored, does not exceed nor precede predestination, but follows it: Therefore it is not the object of it. For, as the creable depends on the indeterminate and absolute omnipotence of God, so what is to be created depends on that omnipotence determined to creation by predestination of the will; and therefore cannot come before predestination, which is its efficient cause.

The end result was not what Gomarus had hoped to occur. He wanted Arminius and his theology to be rejected once and for all. Instead, Arminius found an audience willing to listen to his courteous and soft-spoken interpretation of doctrine. Gomarus' attack had backfired. As indicated by Bangs, the Assembly members were "offended by Gomarus' speech" and "could not believe [Arminius] to be the two-faced person Gomarus pictured him to be."

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Despite this setback, Gomarus immediately re-challenged Arminius to another debate sometime during the next year. However, it was never to occur because Arminius died soon thereafter in 1609. Due to the violence that followed because of riots in several Dutch cities over the Remonstrants, Gomarus and the other Supralapsarians found the Synod of 1618 more easily swayed in denouncing Arminius' teachings as depicted in the Remonstrants' five points.

According to church historian Roger Olsen, with the support of Prince Maurice of Nassau, the Synod "concluded by condemning as here-

tics the Remonstrant leaders." This resulted in hundreds of ministers, teachers, and theologians in support of the Arminian party being removed from their respective positions and subsequently sent into exile or imprisoned.

Franciscus Gomarus had finally conquered Arminius and his theology—at least for the moment. However, Arminianism arose to become an important theological movement in Europe and the West, but no such large movement of "Gomarians" sprung forth from his efforts to extinguish the dangerous theology of his most dangerous opponent — Jacobus Arminius.

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## In Defense of *Ten Commandments*: The Perpetual Mandate of Sabbath Observance

*Joseph D. McPherson*

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**T**he ten commandments are acknowledged to be the backbone of Old Testament moral law and thus to be honored and obeyed in all dispensations, including our own. Four voices from Scripture have made the meaning and duty of honoring the Sabbath clearer and more understandable. While others could be cited, we wish to focus on Moses the lawgiver, Nehemiah the post-exilic governor of Judah, Isaiah the prophet, and Christ Jesus, our ultimate lawgiver and final Judge.

"Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy" (Exod 20:8) was, as we all know, one of ten commandments written by the finger of God on stone and delivered by Moses. In that particular context, keeping the Sabbath day holy was expressly applied to the ceasing of physical labor normally carried out the other six days of the week.

Nehemiah, governor of Judah, following the Jews return from exile, forbade the treading of wine presses on the Sabbath, together with the business of trade and commerce in and around the gates of Jerusalem.

The prophet Isaiah, however, expands further our understanding of what God expects of us concerning Sabbath day activity. Fully in-

spired of God, the prophet wrote: "If you turn back your foot from the Sabbath, from doing your pleasure on my holy day, and call the Sabbath a delight and the holy day of the Lord honorable; if you honor it, not going your own ways, or seeking your own pleasure, or talking idly, then you shall take a delight in the Lord, and I will make you ride on the heights of the earth; I will feed you with the heritage of Jacob your father, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken" (Isa. 58:13-14 ESV).

In his Sermon on the Mount, Jesus makes very clear what our attitude to the moral law should be: "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished. Therefore, whoever relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven. But whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 5:17-19 ESV).

In his *Explanatory Notes Upon the New Testament*, John Wesley renders verse 19 thus: "Whosoever therefore shall break one of the least of

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these commandments, and teach men so, shall be the least in the kingdom of heaven: but who-soever shall do and teach them, shall be great in the kingdom of heaven." The words, "one of the least of these commandments" he observes to be any "so accounted by men." Those who "shall be least in the kingdom of heaven" he understands to be those who in reality "shall have no part therein."

Jesus faced much criticism and censor from the scribes and Pharisees while repeatedly healing the sick and crippled on the Sabbath and even defended his disciples when they did what was necessary for the satisfying of bodily hunger and necessary sustenance. In accordance with Jesus' teachings and Scripture in general, we are to understand, therefore, that the Sabbath or Lord's Day is to be set aside for rest from the common labor and business of the week while giving ourselves to activities and pursuit of worship, duties of necessity and duties of mercy.

Rev. John Fletcher was the esteemed Vicar of Madeley, England, in the eighteenth century and well-recognized apologist for early Methodist teachings. In his *Checks to Antinomianism* he has likened the church to a ship endeavoring to navigate the straits between two rocks of error. The rock on the left he identified as Pharisaism, one scriptural example being the "teaching for doctrines the commandments of men" (Matt. 15:9). The rock on the right he identified as Antinomianism, scripturally defined as "[making] void the law though faith" (Rom. 3:31). Again

and again he makes the point that throughout its history, the church has found it perilously difficult to avoid these two extremes and was repeatedly found crashing on one or the other of these rocks while endeavoring to navigate the narrow straits. Antinomianism, which means "against law" or "lawlessness," was a common characteristic of Calvinists in Fletcher's day, who minimized the observance of all moral law. By way of reproof, he wrote: "Instead ... of dressing up the [moral law] as a scarecrow, let us in our degree 'magnify it, and make it honorable,' as did our Lord. Instead of representing it as 'an intolerable yoke of bondage,' let us call it, with St. Paul, 'the law of Christ;' and, with St. James, 'the perfect law of liberty.' And," continues Fletcher, "let every true believer say, with David, 'I love thy commandments above gold and precious stones: I shall keep thy law, forever and ever; I will walk at liberty, for I seek thy precepts.'"

Whether the church crashes against the rock on the right or that on the left, disastrous results will inevitably be the same. True evangelical faith that brings life to the human soul and church body will be found no longer to exist. How, then, is safe navigation to be made through the straits between Pharisaism and Antinomianism? While eschewing the role of those who "teach for doctrines the commandments of men," let us embrace a life of loving the moral law, the law of Christ and law of love. Remember, it is Jesus who reminds all his followers: "If ye love me, keep my commandments" (John 14:15).

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## REVIEWS

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### A MONSTROUS INVERSION: Review of *Nazarenes Exploring Evolution*, Part Two

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Let a man question the inspiration of the Scriptures and a curious, even monstrous, inversion takes place: thereafter he judges the Word instead of letting the Word judge him; he determines what the Word should teach instead of permitting it to determine what he should

believe; he edits, amends, strikes out, adds at his pleasure; but always he sits above the Word and makes it amenable to him instead of kneeling before God and becoming amenable to the Word. — A. W. Tozer

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[It] is “dangerous ... to depart from Scripture, either as to language or sentiment;” and I believe that most of the controversies which have disturbed the church, have arisen from people’s wanting to be wise above what is written, not contented with what God has plainly revealed there. —*Letter from John Wesley to Joseph Benson*

When wrestling with inerrancy in the 80’s, John D. Woodbridge’s *Biblical Authority: Infallibility and Inerrancy in the Christian Tradition* was particularly anchoring for this reviewer. J. I. Packer noted it laid bare the “shoddy scholarship” behind two faulty theses. Faulty thesis one: The Scriptures are authoritative in areas of faith and practice, but not in non-salvific matters like historical minutia, chronology, geography, zoology, or other scientific details.

Faulty thesis two: Inerrancy is a novelty of the nineteenth century. Once, when pressed in an interview for my stance on Scripture, I recall a curmudgeonly gate-keeper at a confessional school labeling my inerrantist view as “a late nineteenth century Princetonian construct.” I’m guessing it wasn’t meant to flatter, and in the ensuing fifteen years at this college I encountered allies for both faulty towers above; artful dodgers very clever at quarantining their personal credo from “handbook dogma;” and camouflaging their true convictions from easy detection. How this comports with any meaningful integrity is a question to be picked up below.

Packer praised Woodbridge’s book as a series of “knock-out blows” and a “nasty job” that needed doing. A Woodbridge or two would be needed to tackle the diverse topics, misconceptions, distractions, and camouflage in *Nazarenes Exploring Evolution* (NEE). This reviewer is no Woodbridge – a deficit amplified all the more since a review can’t counter a work 100 times larger. Compounding matters further is the fact that our fieriest emotions seem to incubate in wait for exchanges on origins. That’s a confession more than an accusation. No one likes “nasty jobs” and I genuinely have no intent to alienate, hurt, demean, oversimplify or misrepresent. Where I fail, please extend forgiveness. Spoiler alert: straight talk, generalizations, and inelegant lopping off of corners ahead.

First off, the term “evolution” (and “Darwinism”) is hotly debated, so it’s unfortunate that NEE leaves the burden on the reader to cobble together a definition. It seems the writers hold to a God-ordained evolutionary process as the best explanation for all the diversity of life

we see. And that the creator has providentially achieved his purposes via Darwinian pathways, meaning that humans and beasts are the same biological continuum. Thus, what separates the NEE’s model of origins from secular university textbook orthodoxy is NEE leaves room for a divine foot in the door; though unfortunately it’s never explained how “divine agency” is ferreted from the raw scientific data. Here NEE basically asserts that, “It doesn’t matter HOW God created ... as long as one affirms THAT God created” (pp. 16, 45, 53, 64, etc). But as we’ll see, the “how” factor is deeply relevant for a number of reasons.

Many in NEE and Church of the Nazarene [COTN] higher education don’t hide their embrace of evolutionary ideas nor their denial of inerrancy. This transparency is rare and refreshing for progressives in confessional schools. But those who’ve fallen prey to the aforementioned two faulty towers don’t always stop there. A denial of inerrancy is so often followed by the “monstrous inversion” noted by Tozer. No one familiar with Wesley can conceive of him invoking scientific dogmas to determine which Scriptures are binding or how they’re to be exegested. Early Wesleyan tradition is not perfect, but who would doubt that the key thinkers in those days were characterized by a complete submission to the incarnate Word and inscripturated Word—striving to submit to the best exegesis of special revelation, and not beholden to the imprimatur of extrabiblical entities.

The COTN Manual doesn’t have a commitment to *strict* inerrancy, though many in the rank and file do. And thus many COTN academics who defend neo-Darwinism bristle at any suggestion that the denomination ever held to anything like full inerrancy, wanting to put as much daylight as possible between themselves and fundamentalism. *Square Peg: Why Wesleyans Aren’t Fundamentalists*, edited by Al Truesdale, is dedicated to this point. But being embarrassed by or denying fundamentalist roots and inerrancy-like commitment to Scripture does not mean they are not there, as shown in McCarthy, “Nazarenes and the Authority of the Bible, 1908-1988: Eighty Years of Changing Definitions in the Church of the Nazarene,” and Reasoner, *The Importance of Inerrancy*. If any NEE authors hold to full inerrancy, they hide it very well. If any draw a line in the exegetical sand defending a literal Adam and Eve, or a literal primal act of disobedience in a literal garden, followed by a literal curse (resulting in things like thorns that didn’t exist prior to the fall), their voices are drowned out. For the most part, evolutionary creationists don’t go out on a limb to defend Adam and Eve as literal persons. And when they

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do, they hasten to qualify that the Edenic pair weren't created out of dust and a rib, but in fact had hominid "parents" who had evolved via some Darwinian pathway. Adam and Eve are at best reduced to a Neolithic couple on whom God chose to stamp His *imago dei* and establish covenant. The growing trend in TE (theistic evolution) is to see Adam and Eve as mere *metaphorical representations* instead of real people. Many recent books grapple with the quest for a historical Adam. This is a watershed issue for today's church, and NEE is a wake-up call for the looming crisis in Wesleyan circles. The matter is critical simply because it is tethered to larger issues of soteriology, hermeneutics, theodicy, and the authority of Christ.

In the ivory towers of COTN the claim that Genesis 1-3 is "a mythological version of a historical reality" seems to have moved past mere *exploring* to now being considered the better part of theological valor and so-called "settled science." Thankfully, as NEE acknowledges (and laments), the laity is acting as a firewall against such encroachment. But how could a denomination historically known for its faithfulness to Scripture shift so quickly? A partial answer to this mammoth question must reckon with the long shadows of influential professors at COTN schools – those often and fondly referred to with gratitude in NEE.

Trevecca Nazarene's Fred Cawthorne contends elsewhere that, "Evolution by no means contradicts" Genesis, and "it should strengthen, not threaten, our faith."

Olivet Nazarene University scientist Rick Colling once referred to those who "aggressively ignore or deny many scientific concepts and principles, especially in the domain of evolution," adding that in so doing, they "squeeze God into small, rigid boxes." He believes God "cares enough about creation to harness even the forces of [neo-Darwinian] randomness."

Darrel Falk, Professor Emeritus of Biology at Point Loma, and past president of *BioLogos*, believes the mass of data across the scientific disciplines for the past 150 years "is absolutely clear and equally certain. The earth is not young, and the life forms did not appear in six twenty-four-hour days. God created gradually."

Lastly, Thomas Huxley seems to be enjoying a brief reincarnation as Karl Giberson, formerly of Eastern Nazarene, who thinks evolution is not only true, but actually "an expression of God's creativity." He has famously stated that "genetic evidence has made it clear that Adam and Eve *cannot* have been historical figures, at least as described in the Bible. *More scientifically informed evangelicals within conservative traditions are admitting*

*that the evidence is undermining Creation-Fall-Redemption theology*" [italics added]. He has even said that he is "happy to concede that science does indeed trump religious truth about the natural world." To be clear, he did not contribute a NEE chapter, but his long-time promoting TE ideas in Nazarene academia is evident in the pages. Consider this excerpt from *Saving Darwin*, where he gloats:

Most evangelical colleges teach evolution, albeit quietly, carefully, and often tentatively, although there are exceptions.... Those of us teaching evolution at evangelical colleges are made to feel as if we have this subversive secret we must whisper quietly in our students' ears: "Hey, did you know that Adam and Eve were not the first humans and never even existed? And that you can still be a Christian and believe that?"

This reviewer found precious little in NEE challenging this subversive tactic, and a good deal that dovetails with it. One wonders, with Al Mohler, whether donors, uninformed constituencies, and "parents who send their offspring to Eastern Nazarene College have any understanding of what is taught there – and with such boldness and audacity." Having doubts is part of growing up, but deliberately *promoting* and *instilling* doubts is beyond subversive. It is sinister.

In a 2009 *BioLogos* article, Giberson claims he knows of "no one who has ever lost their faith" in his classes. But elsewhere he actually boasts of the many students he's "converted" to evolutionism. He then adds that these "scientifically informed" graduates often became so dissatisfied with their home churches that they withdrew, "taking their enlightenment with them." He admits that his best students "have completely abandoned their faith traditions," and yet blames the churches! One can only marvel at the shunt across his critical pathways, willfully oblivious to the impact of his secret subversion for twenty-seven years at Eastern Nazarene University. It's bitter-sweet when subversives part ways with their schools; a blessing that new students have one less proselytizer for neo-deism, but incalculably bitter when thinking of all those who've already had traditional views of Genesis purged from their minds. Giberson's over-reach contributed to his ousting. In outing themselves, NEE may also alert university applicants, parents, apologist-pastors, God-fearing board members, and donors that the trumpet's clarity has waned (Matt. 7:15; 1 Cor. 14:8).

*-Thane Hutcherson Ury*

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**Daniel R. Jennings, *2000 Years of Spiritual Warfare: Recorded Accounts of Demonic Activity from the 1st to the 21st Centuries*. Sean Multimedia, 2015. ISBN: 978-1505579017. 213 pages.**

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C. S. Lewis warned that we must avoid the extremes of the magician and the materialist. The magician refers to the pagan worldview in which everything is explained by the supernatural. The materialist refers to the secular or Enlightenment worldview in which everything is explained by science.

Jennings has produced a source book of cases across 2000 years of church history which demonstrates that demons do exist and that Christians have authority over this realm of darkness. Jennings begins with the record of Scripture itself. His footnotes are generally illuminating.

Jennings presents cases from the era of the early church, noting that with the establishment of Christianity by Constantine demonic activity declined. This is a very profound observation. It has been generally assumed that Constantine's conversion was not legitimate. However, Peter J. Leithart challenged this assumption in *Defending Constantine: The Twilight of an Empire and the Dawn of Christendom* (2010).

If it is true that the acknowledgment and influence of Christianity resulted in the decline of demonic activity by the fourth century, then the rejection of Christianity by our courts and culture in the twenty-first century will result in an increase in demonic activity. I believe that explains the spate of random killings, the attraction of terrorism, the growing anarchy, and the sexual perversion which consumes our news.

Jennings believes that many cases from the Middle Ages were exaggerated, having been passed on orally and probably embellished over time. For me, this healthy scepticism gives credibility to Jennings.

Jennings has previously published *The Supernatural Occurrences of John Wesley* (2012) and *The Supernatural Occurrences of Charles G. Finney* (2012). Thus, he has a working knowledge of the phenomenon in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. He also has a balanced view of speaking in tongues, acknowledging it both as a legitimate gift of the Spirit and as a counterfeit demonic manifestation.

Most of his examples from the modern era tend to come from pagan culture, but the book closes with two examples from his own ministry. Jennings portrays a mature position which is neither the categoric rejection of the supernatural by the old-line intellectual modernist or the naive acceptance of the supernatural by the classic charismatic.

In addition to this source book, I would also recommend Appendix A, "Demons and Exorcism in Antiquity" and Appendix B, "Spirit Possession and Exorcism in Societies Today," 87 pages in the massive, two-volume work on *Miracles* by Craig Keener (2011). However, Jennings gives a representative cross-section of church history in just 213 pages.

-Vic Reasoner

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**J. Matthew Pinson, *Arminian and Baptist*. Nashville: Randall House, 2015.  
ISBN: 978-0-89265-696-7. 262 pages.**

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In his book, my friend Matt Pinson lists five species of Arminianism:

"Reformed Arminian" is his preferred label. Essentially Pinson defends the consistency of Baptists to also be Arminian. Historically, he demonstrates that the sixteenth and seventeenth century English General Baptists were Arminian and that the Free Will Baptists also hold to this doctrinal heritage. Pinson concludes that Thomas

Helwys (1575-1616) was the first Baptist and that he was also an Arminian.

However, as Pinson wrote in *A Free Will Baptist Handbook*, p. 12:

The tendency among General Baptists in England and America for the first 250 years of

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their existence was, if they erred, to err on the side of Calvinism rather than on the side of extreme Arminianism, such as Wesleyanism or Campbellism.

In his book, *A Free Will Baptist Handbook*, p. 12, Pinson explained that there was the publication of a confession of faith which has come to be known as the 1812 Former Articles. According to Pinson, this confession of faith is a condensed and revised version of the 1660 English Baptists Confession of Faith. Article Ten establishes that General Baptists of this era were Calvinistic in their view of perseverance. It states, "We believe that the Saints shall persevere in grace, and never finally fall away (Jn. 10:27-29)." Pinson told me that this statement was "an anomaly and mystery" in Free Will Baptist history that disappeared in subsequent printings of that confession.

The defining mark of a Baptist is that they insist upon the ordinance of believers' baptism by immersion. While this was not the position Arminius held, Pinson affirms both this Baptist distinctive as well as an Arminian view of salvation.

"Wesleyan-Arminian" is my preferred label. However, I must express my profound concern that there are significant differences between early Methodist theology and the later American holiness movement. This problem is confounded by the fact that the American holiness movement claims to be "Wesleyan," but is much closer to Finney. I would agree with most of Pinson's rejections of "Wesleyan" doctrine and would attempt to explain that Wesley himself did not teach much of what has been identified with him. Thus, I am attempting to do for Wesley what Pinson is doing for Arminius.

"Stone-Campbell Restoration Arminian" refers to the theology of Barton Stone, Thomas and Alexander Campbell in their quest to restore apostolic Christianity. Historically, this emphasis has been referred to as the Campbellite movement. Pinson and I would be concerned that they were actually teaching baptismal regeneration through immersion. In fairness, however, Jack Cottrell is always careful to distinguish his position from the baptismal regeneration position. This would also be true of Tom Thatcher and Jon Weatherly.

Anabaptist Arminians. This strain would encompass Amish, Mennonites, pietism, mysticism, and a separation from civil government - including pacifism.

Charles Finney's theology. I would prefer to exclude Finney on the basis that he is more properly a Pelagian.

Pinson and I both reject Openness Theology, as developed by Clark Pinnock and articulated by Thomas Oord, as outside the bounds of orthodox Arminianism. We agree that denying God's foreknowledge as a means of solving the problem of Calvinism only results in larger problems since the Scriptures clearly teach God's foreknowledge.

The rest of this review is the result of an ongoing dialog between Dr. Pinson and myself, in which I will compare and contrast early Methodist Arminianism with his Reformed Arminianism.

### 1. Points of Agreement

We agree that the Bible is our final authority. As the Word of God, it cannot err.

We agree that the doctrine of total depravity means human inability to save ourselves. Thus, salvation is not the result of our free choice but the result of God's grace.

We agree that the atonement is universal. We also agree that the atonement should be understood in terms of the satisfaction of divine justice and not in terms of a governmental theory. These terms are often misunderstood and must be defined. Hugo Grotius was a Remonstrant who first articulated the governmental theory of the atonement *after* Arminius. This theory was revived by John Miley, an American Methodist, a hundred years *after* John Wesley. The governmental theory holds that God could have forgiven sin without the death of Christ on the cross, but that his death was intended as a deterrent against sin.

### 2. Points that deserve further dialog

While we both believe that election is conditional, I am more prone to see it as corporate while Pinson sees it as individual.

While we both affirm that justification is imputed righteousness, I am more prone to link imputed and imparted righteousness.

While we both affirm that apostasy is a defection from the faith, I also hold that there are degrees of apostasy. Here, again, sin must be defined. While I do not believe that one deliberate act of sin causes the loss of salvation in a believer, I am concerned that

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unconfessed sin starts a process in motion that must be aborted or the believer is liable at some point to apostasy. Thus, I see at least an indirect connection between sin and apostasy.

While Pinson rejects the Wesleyan doctrine of entire sanctification or Christian perfection, I would assume that he actually rejects the holiness distortion of that doctrine. At a popular level, it is understood as “sinless perfection,” a term which Wesley explicitly rejected. However, the Free Will Baptist Treatise of 1842 taught that one should seek entire sanctification in this life, now! I concede that Pinson knows Baptist history better than I do, but I am particularly interested in his chapter 6, “Atonement, Justification, and Apostasy in Wesley.”

Pinson’s thesis is that Wesley was influenced by John Goodwin, while Reformed Arminians follow Thomas Grantham more closely. Pinson is correct in his assessment that Wesley held to a form of penal satisfaction in his view of the atonement. Pinson is also correct that Wesley did not regard the active obedience of Christ as the basis for our salvation.

The active obedience of Christ refers to his sinless life, while the passive obedience of Christ refers to his atoning death. The Wesleyan understanding is that faith is imputed for righteousness. Our concern is that an emphasis on the imputation of both the active and passive righteousness of Christ, without imparted righteousness, leads to antinomianism. Wesley denied that the righteousness of Christ is imputed in lieu of any subsequent obedience.

Pinson also makes a distinction between past and future sins in the theology of Wesley, but I think he misunderstands Wesley at this point. While all sins, past and future, are potentially atoned for through the death of Christ, we are forgiven of past sins at the moment of justification – not future sins.

However, J. J. Butler and Ransom Dunn, two leading educators of the early Freewill Baptist movement wrote in the first Freewill Baptist theology:

We do not understand that Christ’s personal righteousness is imputed to the sinner, and that this constitutes his justification. No such doctrine of imputation is taught in the Scriptures. God never imputes either the sin or holiness of

one being to another; nor does he punish or reward one for the deeds of another.... We are not to believe, then, that the obedience of Christ was imputed to men; but that in consideration of this obedience God can justly dispense pardon to believers, and accept them for Christ’s sake.... The personal righteousness of Christ cannot become the personal righteousness of any other being [*Lectures in Systematic Theology*, 248 – 249].

Pinson explained to me that these northern Free-will (one word) Baptists were a different group than the Southern Free Will (two words) Baptists. The northern branch was started by Benjamin Randall and were originally labeled “freewill” by Calvinists. Essentially, there were two strands of Freewill/Free Will Baptists and the northern group either merged with the southern group in 1935 or merged with the Northern Baptist Convention in 1911.

In 1942 Free Will Baptist Bible College began. The head of the Bible college was L. C. Johnson, a graduate of Bob Jones University, who brought with him the Calvinistic teaching he learned at Bob Jones. In 2012 the college changed its name to Welch College and Dr. Pinson currently serves as its president.

Pinson wrote, “The Free Will Baptists of the South defined themselves theologically in debate and interaction with Calvinistic Baptists rather than other types of Arminians.” But some of the earlier strands of freewill Baptists were more Wesleyan.

I think Pinson also misunderstands Wesley’s statements on imputed righteousness. He did not reject imputed righteousness but always wanted to keep it connected to imparted righteousness – connecting justification with regeneration.

Pinson concluded that Wesley was more works-oriented in contrast to the more grace-oriented emphasis of Reformed Arminians. The point is not that I must defend my man Wesley while Pinson defends his man Grantham. Certainly both men were fallible. But both men exemplify how modifications in doctrine have practical outcomes. Ultimately, we must all turn to the Holy Scriptures to settle such issues.

Essentially, Reformed Arminianism is guarding against legalism while Wesleyan-Arminianism is guarding against lawlessness. Both extremes must be kept in

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balance. I can only testify that as a college student reading Wesley's sermons for the first time, I discovered more grace than I had ever heard preached previously.

As much as anything, this review illustrates the need for proper definitions. I do not understand how Pinson can be confessional but not creedal. We could also discuss such distinctions as sacrament versus ordinance. Ironical-

ly, the *Wesleyan-Arminian* strain is more Reformed in ecclesiology and eschatology than the Reformed Arminian. But these differences need not rend our fellowship. While labels can divide, if we look past them we may find that our differences are substantial *or* that they are simply the result of misunderstanding each other.

-*Vic Reasoner*

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