quotes from Aquinas.

Speaking of Aquinas, there are intellectual resources in Christian doctrine which could improve this book. The book does not wrestle with the implications of a Trinitarian God and the revelation of this God in Jesus Christ for how we view the relationship of God and creation. It never contemplates the intrinsically non-competitive understanding of the relationship between God and his world, which perspective is the fruit of the church's reflection on the person of Jesus Christ. It never wrestles with the fact that God is not only exterior to his creation but also more interior to it than it is to itself. There is no discussion of God's love, giving the impression that such is irrelevant to the topic at hand.

This book is valiant. Of that there is no doubt. Yet more work is needed before it clarifies our knowledge of the difficult doctrine of reprobation.

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40 Questions about Arminianism, by J. Matthew Pinson. Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2022. 400 pp. $27.99.

J. Matthew Pinson is the president of Welch College, formerly Free Will Baptist College. He is a self-confessed "Reformed Arminian." When this reviewer met Pinson at a national ETS meeting some years ago, and when Pinson described himself with that nomenclature, he had a glint in his eye, knowing that I would probably feel as if he had just used a self-contradictory label. But in his new book, *40 Questions About Arminianism*, Pinson convincingly describes a mediating position between traditional Calvinism and Wesleyan-Arminianism. He also demonstrates that his "Reformed Arminian" view was held by Jacobus Arminius.

Pinson is eminently suited to describe the doctrines of Arminianism, in all of its varieties. Pinson writes with clarity and feeling, but with evenhandedness much appreciated in this sometimes-touchy conversation. For example, when he questions the L in TULIP, he makes a simple admission that I wish were far more common in theological debate, especially this one: "Every theological system has difficult passages it must deal with; five-point Calvinists are not alone in this" (119).

Pinson's book makes regular appeal to the difference between "how one comes to be in the state of grace" and "what it means to be in a state of grace." Some of his most basic concepts—and his own position—can be discerned from just two quotes: "[Arminius] agreed with Calvin and his followers on what it means to be in a state of grace, but he differed from them on how one comes to be in a state of grace" (35). This is what makes Pinson an Arminian: he follows Arminius against Calvin

on how one comes to be in a state of grace. What makes him a "*Reformed* Arminian"—and what is such a fish-fowl? A second quote will explain:

> Do Arminians affirm the imputation of Christ's righteousness in justification? Wesleyan Arminians typically have answered no to this question, while Reformed Arminians have said yes. The doctrine of justification and how it relates to the doctrines of the nature of atonement, sanctification, perseverance, and assurance, constitute the main difference between Reformed Arminianism and Wesleyan Arminianism. These two systems agree on how one comes to be in a state of grace, but disagree on what it means to be in a state of grace (97).

So Pinson's Reformed Arminianism stands with the Reformed against the Wesleyans (and those of a Keswick persuasion) on much of the doctrine of sanctification; it stands with the Wesleyans against the Reformed on key aspects of the doctrine of soteriology.

Pinson levies another critique at Wesleyans by making a helpful parallel between the views of justification found in N. T. Wright's New Perspective and those put forward by Wesleyan-Arminians. The latter have, at times, actually explicitly endorsed the former (Pinson mentions Ben Witherington and Joseph Dongell [106]). Both viewpoints appeal to a version of "covenant faithfulness" as the means by which one "stays in."

Pinson is very helpful throughout his book in his efforts to explain Arminius's own views. He repeatedly quotes Arminius—who, in my experience, is far more often named than quoted in theological debate. This is perhaps because, as Pinson expertly shows, Arminius is such an unexpected tertium quid. Arminius considered himself Reformed and "agreed wholeheartedly with Calvin on justification" (98). Arminius wrote: "My position is not so different from his as to prevent my signing my name to the positions [Calvin] takes in Book III of his Institutes. To these opinions, I am prepared to state my full approval at any time" (67). Arminius believed in forensic justification, in the imputed righteousness of Christ, in the necessity of Christ's active and passive obedience for our salvation. Pinson argues forcefully that Arminius should neither be called a "synergist" nor a "semi-Pelagian." By contrast, Arminius held to "an Augustinian view of depravity and inability that was within the bounds of Reformed confessional theology" (140). Pinson contends Arminius wished to maintain "the greatest possible distance from Pelagianism" (140).

Pinson argues that Arminius lived at a time when Dutch Calvinism was not as carefully defined as it later came to be; indeed, Arminius believed himself to be not only Reformed but in line with the Belgic Confession of Faith and Heidelberg Catechism (141). Arminius, Pinson says, "represented a strain of thinking in the Reformed churches prior to the Synod of Dort (1618–1619) that had always been broader than Calvinist predestinarianism" (35).

The 40 questions series makes for a reasonably brisk read, with clearly defined topics and a definite forward movement. Pinson guides readers through some "Introductory and Historical Questions," many

focused on the history of Arminius and the Remonstrants, others focused on the history of Calvin and the Calvinists. Then Pinson moves to the atonement and justification, where he finds special areas of agreement between the Reformed and his Reformed Arminianism. Then he turns to free will and grace, where, of course, Calvinism and (all varieties of) Arminianism seriously diverge. The theme of differences between Calvinism and Arminianism continues in the last three sections of the book: "Resistible Prevenient Grace," "Election and Regeneration," and finally "Perseverance and Apostasy."

Pinson is clearly indebted to his teachers, specifically to Leroy Forlines and Robert Picirilli, while having done hard work on his own to become conversant with both historical and present writings on soteriology, from both Calvinists and Arminians. This book would be very useful in a soteriology class, because it gives a clear presentation of multiple different views.

Pinson's book is not an equal and opposite reaction to the kind of focused, sustained exegesis found in, for example, John Piper's *The Justification of God: An Exegetical and Theological Study of Romans 9:1–23* (Baker, 1993). But neither is it fair to say that he spends too much time on historical and systematic theology and not enough in the pages of Scripture. About halfway through the book, he begins including significant sections of exegesis covering John 1:9 ("the light that lightens every man"), John 6 ("the Father who sent me draws him"), Eph 1:14 ("the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it"), Rom 8:29–30 ("those whom he foreknew, he also predestined"), and other texts. He also canvasses Calvinist and Arminian views of perseverance and apostasy passages such as the famous "warning passages" in Hebrews (3:12–14; 6:4–6; and 10:26–29).

Pinson's mediating position leads him to make trenchant observations about Calvinism. At multiple points throughout the book, Pinson acknowledges that certain Calvinistic complaints about Arminianism carry weight, especially against Wesleyan-Arminianism. For example, he writes: "Calvinist critics of Arminianism say that it is man-centered and places more emphasis on human freedom and God's love for man than on God's glory and holiness. That is no doubt true for many later Arminians, but not for Arminius, and not for all Arminians" (168–69). He also says: "Contemporary Arminians could stand to learn from Piper's Edwardsean emphasis on the 'God of grace and glory,' but they must articulate a more biblical account of those beautiful truths that avoids the determinism of Calvinism" (168). Further: "While I have no hard data on this, four-point Calvinism seems to becoming [*sic*] the most popular form of Calvinism today, despite strong efforts among consistent Calvinists to argue for definite atonement" (120, n. 3).

It is difficult to state any more clearly and succinctly the most common objection to Calvinists' common "soft compatibilism": "Compatibilist Calvinists want to redefine free will so as to make it compatible with determinism—that every choice is determined by God and at the same time free. So they define free will differently from the way it is

commonly defined. For them, free will is not the freedom to choose otherwise. Instead, it is doing what one wants to do" (160). These are more reasons why Pinson's book would make an excellent textbook in any seminary.

On the one hand, Pinson's Reformed Arminianism leads this reviewer to a more thorough rejection of the distinctives of Wesleyan-Arminianism. Penal substitutionary atonement and the imputation of Christ's alien righteousness are just what Machen said of them on his deathbed: they are essential to our faith; I have no hope without them. I am confident that the Lord is able to make my Wesleyan-Arminian brothers stand, but I could not in good conscience stand where they do. In fact, Pinson's book could be rather useful to a Calvinist who is arguing against Wesleyanism: Even a fellow, self-confessed Arminian does not find it persuasive at key points (see, for example, Pinson's discussion on p. 194 of opposing strains in Wesleyanism that both originate in Wesley—one seeing prevenient grace as the "drawing grace" of God and the other as "the lessening of depravity" or even "restored free will").

On the other hand, Pinson's Reformed Arminianism helped me clarify areas of what I believe to be legitimate disagreement between parties in the church. I am not able to read Romans 9:19–20 in any other way than the Reformed way; I have tried. But, frankly, I can see why Reformed Arminians feel the necessity of positing a "prevenient grace." Pinson does not argue that this concept is taught in Scripture but that it is taught *by* Scripture, and while this is one eminent reason I do not hold to the doctrine, I acknowledge that my (four-point) Calvinism leads me to have to make some similar extrapolations. Pinson is both humble and wise to acknowledge that "the debate [over prevenient grace] is largely decided based on other beliefs one holds. If one believes that Holy Scripture teaches both the *gratia universalis* and *gratia resistibilis*, then the Arminian doctrine of prevenient grace follows" (192).

I, for my part as an exegete more than a systematic theologian, observe that, claims about Arminianism's alleged semi-Pelagianism excepted, theologically responsible American Christians tend to treat the differences between Calvinism and Arminianism as precisely an intramural debate. American Protestant evangelicalism has managed to hold Arminians (of various sorts) and Calvinists (of various sorts) together. As the leader of a small institution, the Bible Faculty Summit, that does this very thing, I appreciate the graciousness and clarity of a writer like Pinson who is true to his denominational convictions as I am true to mine, but who works hard to be fair and even-tempered in discussion and debate. I read precisely zero grandstanding or arrogance in Pinson's words.

A final proof of Pinson's skill, charity, and equanimity is that his book is endorsed both by leading Arminian Roger Olson and by leading Calvinist Michael A. G. Haykin—proof that Calvinists and Arminians are able to agree on something.

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