

# The Formula of Concord in Light of the Overwhelming Arminianism of American Christianity<sup>1</sup>

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Concluding a United States lecture tour, Dietrich Bonhoeffer deftly summarized American Protestantism in 1936 as “Protestantism without the Reformation.”

God has granted American Christianity no Reformation. He has given it strong revivalist preachers, churchmen and theologians, but no Reformation of the church of Jesus Christ by the Word of God... American theology and the American church as a whole have never been able to understand the meaning of “criticism” by the Word of God and all that it signifies. Right to the last they do not understand that God’s “criticism” touches even religion, the Christianity of the church and the sanctification of Christians, and that God has founded his church beyond ethics. In American theology, Christianity is essentially religion and ethics.... Because of this the person and work of Christ, must for theology, sink in the background and in the long run remain misunderstood, because it is not recognized as the sole ground of radical judgment and radical forgiveness.<sup>2</sup>

Robert Jensen suggests that Bonhoeffer's critique of American Protestantism also aptly sums up what the famous author of *Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God* (1741), Jonathan Edwards (1703–58), rebuked as Arminianism in his 1734 sermons, *Justification by Faith Alone* and the *Justice of God in the Damnation of Sinners*, which sparked the “Awakening” in Northampton, Massachusetts.<sup>3</sup> Jensen goes on to argue that what Edwards describes as Arminianism “was the Christian version—then there was no other—of the American culture-religion,” that has assumed a myriad of seeming contradictory forms in its evolution within the cultural context of American religion.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> This article appears in the *Lutheran Synod Quarterly*, vol. 52, no. 4 (December 2012): pp. 301–334.

<sup>2</sup> Dietrich Bonhoeffer, “Protestantism without the Reformation,” in *No Rusty Swords: Letters, Lectures and Notes, 1928–1936*, trans. Edwin H. Robertson and John Bowden (London: Collins, 1965), 92–118.

<sup>3</sup> Jonathan Edwards, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, ed. Perry Miller, et al. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1957–), 22:400–418, 19:144–243, 19:337–77 respectively.

<sup>4</sup> Robert Jensen writes, “In Edwards’ use, and that of New England generally, it was not necessarily advocacy of the particular principles of the Dutch theologian, Jacob Arminius, but rather a religious and theological mood of which Arminius has been the most notorious instance in Puritan memory. Broadly, ‘Arminianism,’ was New England’s name for a kind of religion that appeared in all times and places of the church, and has other times been known as ‘semi-Pelagianism,’ ‘synergism,’ etc. ‘Arminianism’ is our inevitable self-serving interpretation of human responsibility over against God’s mercy, according to which, if we are blessed it is at least partially because we have chosen and labored to be, while when we suffer God is suddenly invoked for our unilateral rescue. But what Edwards called ‘Arminianism’ should be seen as a somewhat more specific phenomenon, the particularly American form of this religion. What Edwards called ‘Arminianism’ has perhaps never been more succinctly described than by Dietrich Bonhoeffer’s phrase for American religion: ‘Protestantism without the Reformation.’ Edwards’ ‘Arminianism’ was the Christian version—then there was no other—of the American culture-religion. It had and has many sects. The first to become theologically aware, whose dogma may perhaps be stated. ‘God never violates human personality,’ is that which rules ‘mainline’ Protestantism

After surveying contemporary Evangelicalism in his *Christless Christianity: The Alternative Gospel of the American Church*, Michael Horton largely resonates with Bonhoeffer's critique of American Christianity as well. He uses Bonhoeffer's assessment of American Christianity as a call to return to Reformation theology as well as a call to resist the American church's captivity to a "moralistic, therapeutic deism."<sup>5</sup> Can Orthodox Lutheranism then afford to disregard this invitation to proclaim an alternative to the Arminianism of cultural American Christianity when there is such a resounding cry for a return to Reformation theology from voices even beyond the pale of Confessional Lutheranism?

The title assigned for this conference paper was *Formula of Concord II in Light of the Overwhelming Arminianism of American Christianity*.<sup>6</sup> But one can already see that the term *Arminianism* has been used in a number of different ways and that FC II cannot address every aspect of Arminianism, both for historical and systematic reasons. This paper then will focus on two questions. The first question is what is Arminianism and how has it developed in America? The second question is how does the FC help American Lutherans address the tenets of Arminianism?

Jacobus Arminius (Jacob Harmensz or Hermanszoon; 1559–1609)<sup>7</sup> was a Reformed cleric in Amsterdam from 1583–1603, a professor of theology at the University of Leiden from 1603–9, and the rallying point for a modified Reformed theology over against the Calvinism that was prevailing in the Dutch Reformed Church.<sup>8</sup> Born in Oudewater near Utrecht in Holland, the

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and found its first self-conscious statement in the writing of... [Edwards'] contemporaries. Another sort of 'Arminianism' ruled the experience of those in Edward's congregation who eventually obtained his dismissal. This is the religion of achievers; since the Civil War its dogma has regularly been made explicit in the collocation of God and capitalism as defining 'American individual freedom.' At present, perhaps the most pervasive churchly 'Arminianism' is that of those in all denominations who conceived of faith on the model of therapy. Among those who intend to remain faithful to original American evangelical Christianity, it is regularly—a notable irony!—their version of revival that embodies yet another Arminianism. And where American religiosity is not entirely disencumbered of the gospel, there appears the distilled Arminianism of the religiously assisted quest for self-fulfillment. But what, univocally, was 'Arminianism'? It was Protestantism without the Reformation. It was the assimilation of Protestant protest against spiritual bondage to Enlightenment protest against religious authority, that is, given the situation in the eighteenth century, against precisely the most specific elements of Christianity. 'Arminianism' was Protestantism carried not by the Reformation's demand for greater fidelity to the gospel's radically upsetting promises, but by the exactly opposite concern, that the promises not upset bourgeois satisfaction. 'Arminianism' was and is the religion whose first question over against the gospel of God's act is, 'But what is our part?' and over against the divine law that judges our acts is, "But surely God will not hold us so strictly accountable?" 'Arminianism' was a 'Protestant principle' mustered not on behalf of threatened 'catholic substance' but rather for the further mitigation of its offensive promise and demands." See *America's Theologian: A Recommendation of Jonathan Edwards* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 53–55.

<sup>5</sup> Michael Horton, *Christless Christianity: The Alternative Gospel of the American Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2008), 237–9. See also the discussion about the rise of "The New Calvinism" in "10 Ideas Changing the World Right Now," *Time* (March 12, 2009).

<sup>6</sup> All reference to original texts of the Lutheran Confessions are made on the basis of the critical edition, *Die Bekenntnisschriften der evangelisch-lutherischen Kirche*, 11th ed. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1992). All English translations of the Lutheran Confessions are taken from Robert Kolb and Timothy Wengert, eds., *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000). The standard abbreviations for the Lutheran Confessions can be found in the latter, xi–xii.

<sup>7</sup> Carl Bangs, *Arminius: A Study in the Dutch Reformation* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1971); Carl Bangs, "Arminius, Jacobus," in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Reformation*, ed. Hans J. Hillerbrand (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 1:72–73; Paul Merritt Bassett, "Arminianism," in *The Encyclopedia of Protestantism*, ed. Hans Joachim Hillerbrand (New York: Routledge, 2004), 1:152–66; Benjamin J. Kaplan, "Arminius, Jacobus," in *The Encyclopedia of Protestantism*, ed. Hans J. Hillerbrand (New York: Routledge, 2004), 1:166–68; Keith D. Stanglin, "Arminius and Arminianism: An Overview of Current Research," in *Arminius, Arminianism, and Europe: Jacobus Arminius (1559/60–1609)*, ed. Th. Marius van Leeuwen, Keith D. Stanglin, and Marijke Tolsma (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 3–24.

<sup>8</sup> The standard editions of Arminius' collected writings are Jacobus Arminius, *Opera Theologica* (Leiden: Godfrey Basson, 1629); Jacobus Arminius, *The Writings of James Arminius*, 3 vols. (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1996). The former contains Latin translations of a number Dutch texts. All citations will be made from the latter, which is a translation of the former, but includes more writings and primary source material. The most recent studies of Arminius' theology are Richard Muller, *God, Creation, and*

theological context of Arminius' youth was broadly Reformed, but not strictly Calvinist.<sup>9</sup> Upon the death of his father, his education was overseen by two of his mother's cousins, first by Theodorus Aemilius (d. 1574) and then by Rudolphus Snellius (1546–1613). The latter taught Ramist logic, a simpler, deductive, and visual alternative to Aristotelian dialectic, in the arts faculty of the University of Marburg, the university of a now confessionally mediating Church of Hesse.<sup>10</sup> Here Arminius began his early university formation in 1574. The next year, he briefly went home after learning that Spanish soldiers had slaughtered his entire family, but then returned to Marburg. In 1576, Arminius left Germany and became the twelfth student to matriculate at the newly founded University of Leiden (1575). At the same time, one of its lecturers, Caspar Coolhaes (c. 1534–1609), was embroiled in an ecclesiological controversy with the advancing Genevan theology in Holland, because of his support for the early Dutch Reformed Church's Erastian church polity, a position that Arminius shared.<sup>11</sup> After six years of study, Arminius came to the attention of the Amsterdam merchants' guild, who awarded him a grant to complete his education abroad, provided that he promise to return and serve the church of that city, which had only recently been reformed (1578). As a result, he attended the Genevan Academy between 1582–87, where he studied under Theodore Beza (Théodore de Bèze; 1516–1605), who was John Calvin's (Jean Cauvin; 1509–64) successor, a French humanist with a penchant for Aristotelianism, as well as a father of supralapsarian double predestination.<sup>12</sup> However, the theological position in Geneva was still somewhat fluid at this time, because it was not Arminius' theology, but his Ramism that caused him conflict with the Aristotelian faculty. What is more, Beza would ultimately give Arminius a positive letter of recommendation.<sup>13</sup> At Geneva, Arminius became friends with Johannes Wtenbogaert (Jan

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*Providence in the Thought of Jacob Arminius: Sources and Directions of Scholastic Protestantism in the Era of Early Orthodoxy* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1991); William Gene Witt, "Creation, Redemption and Grace in the Theology of Jacob Arminius" (Ph.D. diss., University of Notre Dame, 1993); E. Stuart Clarke, *The Ground of Election: Jacobus Arminius; Doctrine of the Work and Person of Christ* (Waynesboro: Paternoster, 2006); Keith D. Stanglin, *Arminius on the Assurance of Salvation: The Context, Roots, and Shape of the Leiden Debate, 1603–1609* (Leiden: Brill, 2007); Th. Marius van Leeuwen, Keith D. Standlin, and Marijke Tolsma, eds. *Arminius, Arminianism, and Europe: Jacobus Arminius (1559/50–1609)* (Leiden: Brill, 2009), William den Boer, *God's Twofold Love: The Theology of Jacob Arminius (1559–1609)* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2010).

<sup>9</sup> Alistair Duke, "The Ambivalent Face of Calvinism in the Netherlands, 1561–1618," in *International Calvinism 1541–1715*, ed. Menna Prestwich (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), 109–34.

<sup>10</sup> Walter J. Ong, *Ramus, Method, and the Decay of Dialogue: From the Art of Discourse to the Art of Reason* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983). Interestingly enough the Swabian Lutheran theologian, Aegidius Hunnius, (1550–1603), who would come to coin the term *intuitu fidei*, would soon be called as theology professor at Marburg (1576–92). The net result of his attempts to shore up its Lutheranism was a Calvinist Hesse-Kassel and Lutheran Hesse-Darmstadt. Ultimately Hunnius helped reorganize the Wittenberg theology faculty after the Second Crypto-Calvinist Controversy. See Markus Matthias, *Theologie und Konfession: Der Beitrag von Ägidius Hunnius (1550–1603) zur Entstehung einer lutherischen Religionskultur* (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2004).

<sup>11</sup> Bassett, "Arminianism," 1:154–55. Erastian church polity stressed the civil control of the church and was typical of Reformed Zurich, Lutheran Württemberg, and the Reformed Palatinate. Presbyterian church polity stressed ecclesiastical control of the church and was typical of Reformed Basil, Reformed Strasburg, and Reformed Geneva.

<sup>12</sup> Richard Muller opposes the idea that predestination functions as "a 'central dogma' or fundamental constructive principle in Reformed theology." He maintains this position with respect to Calvin's generally infralapsarian double predestination with supralapsarian accents, Beza's more developed supralapsarian form of double predestination, and the even more developed form of supralapsarian double predestination of William Perkins that helped bring about the Arminian Controversy. That being said, he also insists that infralapsarianism was the norm in Reformed theology. To explain further, predestination can be described in terms of double (God decrees election and reprobation) and single predestination (God decrees election only) as well as supralapsarian (God's decree of election [and reprobation] preceded the decree of the fall) and infralapsarian predestination (God's decree of election [and reprobation] succeeded the decree of the fall). See Muller's "Predestination" in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Reformation*, ed. Hans J. Hillerbrand (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 3:332–38 and his *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics: The Rise and Development of Reformed Orthodoxy, ca. 1520 to ca. 1725* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003), 1:126–29.

<sup>13</sup> Carl Bangs has argued that there is little evidence that Arminius ever held to Beza's supralapsarian double predestination, rather than his own conception of conditional predestination. See Bangs, *A Study*, 138–41. Theodore Beza wrote the city council of

Uytenbogaert; 1557–1664), who would become his own immediate theological successor. During this period, Arminius studied at Basel and Padua, and visited Zurich and Rome as well. Interestingly enough this visit to Rome would later be used to discredit his theology as papist.

In 1587 Arminius was installed as the minister of the Old Church (*Oude Kerk*) of Amsterdam, and became a favorite of the merchant oligarchy. Suspicions soon began to arise about his orthodoxy.<sup>14</sup> First he failed to refute two written challenges to supralapsarian double predestination, even when the Amsterdam ecclesiastical senate petitioned him to refute the second one. Then he affirmed a more optimistic anthropology in sermons arguing that Romans 7 was speaking about man under the law or prior to conversion.<sup>15</sup> Next he charged that Calvin's position on double predestination necessitated sin in a letter exchange with Leiden theology professor, Franciscus Junius (1545–1602).<sup>16</sup> In another attempted letter exchange, he questioned the basis of the supralapsarian double predestination of the Cambridge Puritan, William Perkins (1558–1602), who had attacked the synergism of the Melanchthonian Danish Lutheran, Niels Hemmingsen (1513–1600).<sup>17</sup>

In 1602, two seats in the theology faculty at University of Leiden opened. After an extensive negotiation, the university curators selected a man from each of the emerging ecclesial parties. Arminius was then appointed as Junius' successor, *professor ordinarius*, and Leiden's first Dutch theology professor in 1603. He earned his doctorate under his colleague, Franciscus Gomarus (1563–1641) that same year. The subsequent year, Arminius conducted disputations that taught a conception of single predestination founded on Christ and connected with faith.<sup>18</sup> In response, Gomarus reaffirmed supralapsarian double predestination in a public disputation held on October 31, 1604 and attacked Arminius' concept of election for diminishing God's role in election. The university, in turn, split between Gomarists and Arminians, and soon the theological controversy would manifest itself in political unrest. In his final February 1606 rectoral address, Arminius made an Erastian appeal to the civil authorities to convene a synod, where the controversy could be decided on the basis of the Scriptures alone. But this move was regarded to be a challenge to the symbols of Holland and Calvinist church polity, which opposed state interference in ecclesiastical matters.<sup>19</sup> When attempts to convene a national

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Amsterdam, "God has gifted him (Arminius) with an apt intellect both as respects the appreciation and discrimination of things. If this henceforth be regulated by piety, ... it cannot but happen that his power of intellect, ... will be productive of the richest fruits," cited in Th. Marius van Leeuwen, "Introduction: Arminius, Arminianism, and Europe," in *Arminius, Arminianism, and Europe: Jacobus Arminius (1559/60–1609)*, ed. Th. Marius van Leeuwen, Keith D. Standlin, and Marijke Tolsma (Leiden: Brill, 2009), xi.

<sup>14</sup> For a good overview of the Arminian Controversy in the context of Reformed theology, see Philip Benedict, *Christ's Churches Purely Reformed: A Social History of Calvinism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), 300–316.

<sup>15</sup> See Arminius' posthumously published "Dissertation on the True and Genuine Sense of the Seventh Chapter of St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans," reprinted in *The Writings*, 2:471–683 and his "Analysis of the Ninth Chapter of St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans," reprinted in *The Writings*, 3:485–519. They express the logic of his sermons.

<sup>16</sup> See Arminius' posthumously published "A Friendly Conference of James Arminius, the Illustrious Doctor of Sacred Theology, with Mr. Francis Junius, about Predestination, Carried on by Means of Letters," reprinted in *The Writings*, 3:1–248. In truth Calvin is not systematically consistent on the question of supralapsarianism or infralapsarianism. For some supralapsarian statements by John Calvin, see I. John Hesselink, *Calvin's First Catechism: A Commentary* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997), 17; John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, trans. Ford Lewis Battles (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1960), 3.23.

<sup>17</sup> See Arminius' posthumously published "Dr. James Arminius's Modest Examination of a Pamphlet, which that Very Learned Divine, William Perkins, Published Some Years Ago, on the Mode and Order of Predestination, and on the Amplitude of Divine Grace," reprinted in *The Writings*, 3:249–484. Melanchthonian Lutheranism would play a role in Arminius' defense of himself as well. See *The Writings*, 1:640–3.

<sup>18</sup> Arminius, "On Divine Predestination," reprinted in *The Writings*, 2:226–30. See also his "On the Free Will of Man and its Powers," reprinted in *The Writings* 2:189–96.

<sup>19</sup> Arminius, "On Reconciling Religious Dissensions Among Christians," reprinted in *The Writings*, 1:434–541. Belgic Confession (1561) and Heidelberg Catechism (1563) has been made normative by the 1571 Emden and 1574 Dordrecht Synods.

synod came to an impasse, Arminius and Gomarus were called to present their views to the States of Holland and West Friesland. There Arminius gave his *Declaration of His Sentiments with Respect to the Predestination* on October 30, 1608. In this succinct but guarded summation of his core theology, he articulated in four decrees his own mature conception of a conditional, infralapsarian, and single predestination grounded in the foreknowledge of a man's synergistic cooperation with prevenient grace and perseverance in grace.<sup>20</sup> The Leiden theology professor proceeded to insist that God is not the author of evil in his discussion of providence. In the sections dealing with free will, grace, and justification, he avoided Pelagianism and Semi-Pelagianism,<sup>21</sup> but assigned to the human will certain powers or a capacity to cooperate in its conversion, although only when prompted by prevenient grace.<sup>22</sup> The perseverance of the saints was affirmed, but he confessed that he had some strong doubts about it.<sup>23</sup> Arminius pointed to the inward testimony of the Holy Spirit as grounds for the assurance of salvation. The

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While both confessions affirm justification by faith alone, only the Belgic Confession really treats election. However, its 16th article only speaks of an infralapsarian single predestination. The official French text and an English translation of the Belgic Confession can be found in Philip Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom, with a History and Critical Notes* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1919), 3:383–436. The official German text and an English translation of the Heidelberg Catechism can be found in Schaff, *The Creeds*, 3:307–55.

<sup>20</sup> Arminius writes, "I. The First absolute decree of God concerning the salvation of sinful men, is that by which he decreed to appoint his Son, Jesus Christ, for a Mediator, Redeemer, Savior, Priest, and King, who might destroy sin by his own death, might by his obedience obtain the salvation which had been lost, and might communicate it by his own virtue. II. The Second precise and absolute decree of God is that in which he decreed to receive into favor *those who repent and believe*, and, in Christ, for His sake and through Him, to effect the salvation of such penitents and believers as preserved to the end; but to leave in sin and under wrath, *all impenitent persons and unbelievers*, and do damn them as aliens from Christ. III. The Third Divine decree is that by which God decreed to administer *in a sufficient and efficacious manner* the means which were necessary for repentance and faith; and to have such administration instituted (1.) according to the *Divine Wisdom*, by which God knows what is proper and becoming both to his mercy and his severity, and (2.) according to Divine Justice, by which He is prepared to adopt whatever his wisdom may prescribe and put in execution. IV. To these succeeds the Fourth decree, which God is decreed to save and damn certain particular persons. This decree has its foundation in the foreknowledge of God, which he knew from all eternity those individuals who, *would* through his preventing [i.e., prevenient] grace, *believe*, and, through his subsequent grace *would persevere*, according to the before described administration of those means which are suitable and proper for conversion and faith; and by which foreknowledge, he likewise knew those who *would not believe and persevere*." See *The Writings*, 1:653–54. Note that this translation is based on a Latin translation of the original Dutch oration. The Latin translation was not produced by Arminius and some dispute has arisen about its accuracy. Unfortunately this author was not able to consult or read the current Dutch critical edition of this text, *Verklaring van Jacobus Arminius, afgelegd in de vergadering van de Staten van Holland op 30 Oktober, 1608*, ed. G. J. Hoenderdaal (Lochem, 1960). Note that Arminius also favored universal atonement. See *The Writings*, 2:9–10.

<sup>21</sup> Richard Muller once asserted that Arminius' position is Semi-Pelagian in his *Dictionary of Latin and Greek Theological Terms: Drawn Principally from Protestant Scholastic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1993), 294. However, Arminius never seems to posit that the will can initiate conversion without grace. Moreover, Arminius did reject the Nominalist's Semi-Pelagian soteriological axiom, "God will not deny his grace to any one who does what is in him." See *The Writings*, 2:19–20. Pelagianism denies original sin and presupposes that man can be saved without grace. Semi-Pelagianism affirms a sort of original sin, presupposes that man can initiate his conversion, but maintains that God must cooperate by supplying him grace. Synergism also affirms a version of original sin, but maintains that God must initiate man's conversion, although man must cooperate with God's grace. See FC Ep II, 9–11; FC SD II, 74–77.

<sup>22</sup> "But in his *lapsed and sinful state*, man is not capable, of and by himself, either to think, to will, or to do that which is really good; but it is necessary for him to be regenerated and renewed in his intellect, affections or will, and in all his powers, by God in Christ through the Holy Spirit, that he may be qualified rightly to understand, esteem, consider, will, and perform whatever is truly good. When he is made a partaker of this regeneration or renovation, I consider that, since he is delivered from sin, he is cable of thinking, willing, and doing that which is good, but yet *not without the continued aids of Divine Grace*." See *The Writings*, 1:659–60. "Because grace is so attempted and commingled with the nature of man, as not to destroy within him the liberty of his will, but to give it a right direction, to correct its depravity, and to allow man to possess his own proper motions." See *The Writings*, 1:629. See also Arminius, *The Writings*, 1:700–1. Note also that Arminius shows some sympathy with the position levied against him that, "in every nation, all infants who die without [having committed] actual sins, are saved." See *The Writings*, 2:10–14.

<sup>23</sup> "Though I here openly and ingenuously affirm, I never taught that a *true believer can either totally or finally fall away from the faith, and perish*, yet I will not conceal, that there are passages of Scripture which seem to me to wear this aspect; and those answers to them which I have been permitted to see, are not of such kind as to approve themselves on all points to my understanding. On the other hand, certain passages are produced for the contrary doctrine [of Unconditional Perseverance] which are worthy of much consideration." See *The Writings*, 1:667.

possibility of the perfection of believers in this life on the basis of grace was left an open question.<sup>24</sup> He defended a sort of subordinationism that Christ was only *autotheos* in the sense that he “is truly God,” but not in the sense that he “is God of himself.”<sup>25</sup> Finally, he proposed a revision of the Belgic Confession and Heidelberg Catechism. The following year Arminius died. His chair was assumed by Conrad Vorstius (1569–1622), an Arminian who came to be suspected of Socinianism.

Three months after his death, around forty-three Arminian ministers gathered at Gouda (January 1610) to draft five articles of faith called the 1610 *Remonstrance*, which resonated with Arminius’ own theology. The confession’s chief author was Johannes Wtenbogaert. The Calvinists soon responded with the *Counter-Remonstrance*. Henceforth Arminians were known as the Remonstrants and Calvinists as the Counter-Remonstrants. For this reason, the 1610 *Remonstrance* and the writings of Arminius came to represent Classical Arminianism.<sup>26</sup> The 1610 *Remonstrance* taught a conditional, infralapsarian, and single predestination grounded in Christ and in the foreknowledge of a man’s synergistic acceptance of and perseverance in grace (I). The *Remonstrance* affirmed universal atonement, but asserts that only the believer enjoyed the fruits of it (II). It opposed Pelagianism and Semi-Pelagianism, but affirmed a more optimistic anthropology than Calvinism, insofar as man possessed the capacity once activated by prevenient grace to cooperate in his conversion (III). The confession rejected irresistible grace (IV), and retained the perseverance of the saints with some reservations about its biblical foundations (V).<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> “... it is reported, that I entertain sentiments on this subject [perfection of believers in this life] which are very improper, and nearly allied to those of the Pelagians, viz. ‘that is it possible for the regenerate in this life perfectly to keep God’s precepts.’ To this I reply, though these might have been my sentiment, yet I ought not on this account to be considered a Pelagian, either partly or entirely, — provided I had only added that ‘there could do this *by the grace of Christ, and by no means without it.*’ But while I never asserted, that a *believer could perfectly keep the precepts of Christ in this life, I never denied it, but always left it as a matter which has still to be decided.*” See *The Writings*, 1:673–78.

<sup>25</sup> “At a disputation held one afternoon in the University, when the Thesis that had been proposed for disputation was *the Divinity of the Son of God*, one of the students happened to object, ‘that the Son of God was *autotheos* [“God in his own right”], and that he therefore had his essence from himself and not from the Father.’ — In reply to this I observed, ‘that the word *autotheos* was capable of two different acceptations, since it might signify either “one who is truly God,” or “one who is God of himself”; and that it was with great propriety and correctness attributed to the Son of God according to the former signification, but not the latter.’” See *The Writings*, 1:691.

<sup>26</sup> The Calvinist Church historian, Richard Muller, has called for “a new perspective on Arminius’ theology.” He argues that Arminius’ theology is more than a modified doctrine of predestination, but “a full-scale alternative to Reformed theology.” He has also identified a subordinationist tendency in his Christology and pointed out that some Remonstrants had Socinian tendencies. See Muller, *God, Creation*, 271; Muller, *Post-Reformation*, 3:87, 3:96, 3:324–32; Richard Muller, “The Christological Problem in the Thought of Jacobus Arminius,” *Nederlands archief voor kerkgeschiedenis* 68 (1988): 145–63. The Arminian apologist, Roger Olsen, conversely has argued that Classical Arminianism is an orthodox system that “is not incommensurable with the Reformed tradition,” “even if Arminianism should not be included under the rubric ‘Reformed.’” Above all he maintains that Classical Arminianism is neither Pelagian or Semi-Pelagian, but he does acknowledges that many Arminians have become liberal and Semi-Pelagian if not Pelagian. Still he insists that Arminius cannot be blamed for this any more than Calvin can be blamed for Schleiermacher. See Roger Olson, *Arminian Theology: Myths and Realities* (Downers Grove; IVP Academic, 2006), 45, 23–24. See also Roger Olsen, “Don’t Hate Me Because I’m An Arminian,” *Christianity Today* (September 9, 1999); 87–94.

<sup>27</sup> The official Dutch edition of 1610 *Five Arminian Articles* or the *Remonstrance* can be found in Schaff, *The Creeds*, 3:545–49. This edition omits the preface, five negative articles, and conclusion, but includes a Latin and English translation. The five articles read as follows, “I. That God, by an eternal and unchangeable purpose in Jesus Christ his Son, before the foundation of the world, hath determined, out of the fallen, sinful race of men, to save in Christ, for Christ’s sake, and through Christ, those who, through the grace of the Holy Ghost, shall believe on this his son Jesus, and shall persevere in this faith and obedience of faith, through this grace, even to the end; and, on the other hand, to leave the incorrigible and unbelieving in sin and under wrath, and to condemn them as alienate from Christ, according to the word of the Gospel in John 3:36: ‘He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him,’ and according to other passages of Scripture also. II. That agreeably thereunto, Jesus Christ the Savior of the world, died for all men and for every man, so that he has obtained for them all, by his death on the cross, redemption and the forgiveness of sins; yet that no one actually enjoys this

Theological and political tensions were now heating up and the country would soon be on the brink of civil war. The Remonstrants found support in the States of Holland's Grand Pensionary, Johan van Oldenbarnevelt (1547–1619). But the Grand Pensionary did not see eye to eye with the Prince of Orange, Maurits van Nassau (1567–1625), who served as Stadtholder of Holland and the Zeeland as well as the captain- and admiral-general over the army and navy of the provinces. Oldenbarnevelt's signing of the Twelve Year Truce (1609–21) with Habsburg Spain, moreover, not only irritated Maurits van Nassau, but it also bolstered rumors that Arminianism was a papist plot. In 1617, the Calvinists won Maurits van Nassau to their side. He would provoke Oldenbarnevelt, have him executed, and then facilitate a national synod. The Synod of Dordrecht was convened from November 1618–May 1619, met for 180 sessions, consisted of 100 theologians, and included 25 foreign representatives. The successor of Gomarus at Leiden, Simon Episcopius (1583–1643), was now the leader of the Remonstrants, but he and the rest of the Remonstrant representatives were refused a seat at the synod and were considered to be on trial. The synod drew up the Canons of Dordrecht. This refutation of Arminian theology is customarily summarized with the nineteenth-century Calvinist acronym T (total depravity), U (unconditional [infralapsarian double] election), L (limited atonement), I (irresistible grace), and P (perseverance of the saints).<sup>28</sup>

In the aftermath of the Synod of Dordrecht, "Arminianism" would spread to England and New England. At this time Arminianism became an umbrella concept for a number of Anti-Calvinist ideas, which largely evolved in a liberal direction under the influence of Enlightenment thought. The Remonstrants were suppressed until the death of Maurits van Nassau. Thereafter the Remonstrants would achieve a tolerated status, establish a school in Amsterdam, and issue the 1621 *Arminian Confession*.<sup>29</sup> Theologically speaking, the Remonstrant lawyer, Hugo Grotius (1583–1645), would come to develop a moral governmental theory of atonement, which maintained against Socinianism that Christ suffered to preserve God's justice,

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forgiveness of sins except the believer, according to the word of the Gospel of John 3:16, 'For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.' And in the First Epistle of 1 John 2:2: 'And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.' III. That man has not saving grace of himself, nor of the energy of his free will, inasmuch as he, in the state of apostasy and sin, can of and by himself neither think, will, nor do any thing that is truly good (such as saving faith eminently is); but that it is needful that he be born again of God in Christ, through his Holy Spirit, and renewed in understanding, inclination, or will, and all his powers, in order that he may rightly understand, think, will, and effect what is truly good, according to the Word of Christ, John 15:5, 'Without me ye can do nothing.' IV. That this grace of God is the beginning, continuance, and accomplishment of all good, even to this extent, that the regenerate man himself, without prevenient or assisting, awakening, following and cooperative grace, can neither think, will, nor do good, nor withstand any temptations to evil; so that all good deeds or movements, that can be conceived, must be ascribed to the grace of God in Christ, but respects the mode of the operation of this grace, it is not irresistible; inasmuch as it is written concerning many, that they have resisted the Holy Ghost. Acts 7, and elsewhere in many places. V. That those who are incorporated into Christ by true faith, and have thereby become partakers of his life-giving Spirit, have thereby full power to strive against Satan, sin, the world, and their own flesh, and to win the victory; it being well understood that it is ever through the assisting grace of the Holy Ghost; and that Jesus Christ assists them through his Spirit in all temptations, extends to them his hand, and if only they are ready for the conflict, and desire his help, and are not inactive, keeps them from falling, so that they, by no craft or power of Satan, can be misled nor plucked out of Christ's hands, according to the Word of Christ, John 10:28: 'Neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.' But whether they are capable, through negligence, of forsaking again the first beginning of their life in Christ, of again returning to this present evil world, of turning away from the holy doctrine which was delivered them, of losing a good conscience, of becoming devoid of grace, that must be more particularly determined out of the Holy Scripture, before we ourselves can teach it with the full persuasion of our minds."

<sup>28</sup> The official Latin edition of 1618–19 the *Canons of the Synod of Dortrecht* along with an abridged English translation can be found in Schaff, *The Creeds*, 3:550–97.

<sup>29</sup> For an original Latin text with English translation see, Mark A. Ellis, *The Arminian Confession of 1621* (Eugene: Pickwick Publications, 2005). Even though the Arminians issued this confession, given their past experiences, they were hesitant to make it binding in any enforceable manner and tended towards biblicism.

but that he did not suffer the punishment of all human sin. Later the Remonstrant theologian, Philipp van Limborch (1633–1712), would take Arminianism in a Semi-Pelagian direction that foreshadowed liberal theology.<sup>30</sup> English Arminianism began as a movement independent of Arminius. For instance Cambridge Professor, Peter Baro (1534–99), had already expressed a conception of a conditional election based on foreseen faith in a 1596 letter to his Lutheran friend Niels Hemmingsen. However, Stephan Hampton explains further,

The Arminianism of the post-Reformation period was a far more formidable beast than it had been in the early part of the seventeenth century. The systematizing and publishing efforts of Simon Episcopius, Hugo Grotius, Etienne de Courcelles, and Philip van Limborch meant that Arminian Anglicans could call upon theological resources of immense sophistication and subtlety, resources already tempered by half a century of debate with their reformed opponents. Indeed, it is probably fair to say that the later Stuart period is as decisively shaped by the advent of this new, systematic form of Arminianism, as it is by the Reformed reaction to such thinking. After the Restoration, there was a much more explicit alliance between English and continental European Arminianism than there had been in the days of Lancelot Andrewes and William Laud.... Despite the active opposition of several primates, despite the increasing influence of systematic Arminian thinking, despite its polemically disadvantageous associations with lawlessness, rebellion, and regicide, the reformed tradition retained a significant level of support within the Church of England well into the eighteenth century.<sup>31</sup>

In Colonial New England Puritan Congregationalism much like their English counterparts complained about what they deemed to be Arminian theology. Eventually some Congregationalists, like Charles Chauncy (1705–87), came to profess a liberal Semi-Pelagian universalism that stigmatized Arminian theology as inherently liberal.<sup>32</sup>

In context of the Great Awakenings, Arminianism would follow a different trajectory and emerge as the predominant form of Evangelicalism,<sup>33</sup> if not a fundamental component of American Civil Religion.<sup>34</sup> Without a doubt, the term *Evangelicalism* is notoriously difficult to define and has been used in a number of different ways, but two of the leading Evangelical historians today can shed some light on this movement. Mark Noll defined Evangelicalism as “culturally adaptive biblical experientialism.”<sup>35</sup> David Bebbington lists four key marks or

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<sup>30</sup> Hugo Grotius, *Defensio Fidei Catholicae de Satisfactione Christi adversus Faustum Socinium* (Leiden: Patius, 1617). Philipp van Limborch’s Latin dogmatics was soon translated in English as *A Compleat System, or Body of Divinity: Both Speculative and Practical, founded on Scripture and Reason*, trans. John Wilkins and William Jones (London: J. Taylor and A. Bell, 1702).

<sup>31</sup> Stephan Hampton, *Anti-Arminians: The Anglican Reformed Tradition from Charles II to George I* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 271, 274. See also Peter Baro’s letter to Niels Hemmingsen, reprinted in Arminius, *Writings*, 1:91–100.

<sup>32</sup> Charles Chauncy, *The Mystery Hid from Ages and Generations, Made Manifest by the Gospel Revelation: or, The Salvation of All Men* (London: Charles Dilly, 1784). See also Sydney E. Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972), 151–65, 280–313, 388–402; E. Brooks Holifield, *Theology in America: Christian thought from the Age of the Puritans to the Civil War* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 25–156.

<sup>33</sup> In the sixteenth century, Lutherans referred to themselves as *Evangelicals*, *Catholics*, and *Adherents of the Augsburg Confession*. Terms such as *Protesting Ones* and *Lutherans* were originally legal or pejorative terms respectively. However *Evangelical* would come to have the meaning of *Protestant* in the Holy Roman Empire, because the Reformed insisted on being called *Evangelicals* both out of conviction and for the purpose of legal protection in the empire.

<sup>34</sup> See also Robert Bellah, “Civil Religion in America,” *Journal of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences* 96 (1967), 1–21.

<sup>35</sup> Mark Noll, *American Evangelical Christianity: An Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2001), 2.

characteristics of Evangelicalism. They include “*conversionism*, the belief that lives need to be changed; *activism*, the expression of the Gospel in effort; *biblicism*, a particular regard for the Bible; and what may be called *crucicentrism*, a stress on the sacrifice of Christ in the cross.”<sup>36</sup> What is more, Evangelicalism was no repristination of European Protestantism, but a new phenomenon in the history of Christianity.

A shift [took place] away from the European theological tradition, descended directly from the Protestant Reformation, towards a Protestant evangelical theology decisively shaped by its engagement with Revolutionary and post-Revolutionary America. It is not an exaggeration to claim that this nineteenth-century Protestant evangelicalism differed from the religion of the Protestant Reformation as much as the sixteenth-century Reformation Protestantism differed from the Roman Catholic theology from which it emerged. The changes taking place in American religious thought from the 1730s to the 1860s were part of a general shift within Western religious life. Other English speaking regions were also experiencing the move from early modern to modern religion marked by a heightened spiritual inwardness, a new confidence in individual action, and various accommodations to the marketplace. Without attempting a full and comparative history, [Noll] suggest[s] that the pace and direction of theological change in the United States differed from what occurred in other largely Protestant countries of the North Atlantic region.<sup>37</sup>

Even though some Calvinists have tried to exclude Arminianism from Evangelicalism, Evangelicalism’s two chief manifestations are Experiential Calvinism and Experiential Arminianism. The movement had an impact on Lutherans, Roman Catholics, and even Jews as well.<sup>38</sup> The First Great Awakening (1734–50) was predominantly Calvinistic as evident by its two great spokesmen, the Calvinist Methodist, George Whitefield (1714–70), and the New England Congregationalist, Jonathan Edwards. But eventually Evangelicalism’s stress on experientialism and conversionism found Arminianism to be a natural ally, so that the Second Great Awakening (1800–40) was largely dominated by Arminianism.<sup>39</sup> This transition from a predominantly Experiential Calvinism to a predominantly Experiential Arminianism is illustrated by George Whitefield’s break with John Wesley (1703–91) over the latter’s Arminianism. Wesley’s warm Arminianism embraced all the marks of Classical Arminianism, as well as accepted the moral governmental theory of atonement and accepted Christian perfectionism.<sup>40</sup> Not surprisingly, it would be the Methodists along with the Baptists, who deserve most of the credit for making Arminianism the predominant form of Evangelicalism, “the American culture-religion,” and “Protestantism without the Reformation.” Still two other

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<sup>36</sup> David Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s* (London: Unwin Ltd, 1989), 2–3.

<sup>37</sup> Mark A. Noll, *America’s God: From Jonathan Edwards to Abraham Lincoln* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 3, 5, 64–72, 116–137, 227ff. See also Nathan O. Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989).

<sup>38</sup> See also Bassett, “Arminianism,” 1:165; Noll, *America’s God*, 64–72, 116–137, 227ff;

<sup>39</sup> Douglas A. Sweeny suggests that the traditional interpretation of the transition from the First and to the Second Great Awakening in terms of a shift from Calvinism to Arminianism is oversimplistic and ignores the diversity of the movements. See his *The American Evangelical Story: A History of the Movement* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), 21–23, 66–76. That being said, one can still see a Calvinistic predominance in the former and an Arminian predominance in the latter.

<sup>40</sup> John Wesley, *The Question, What is an Arminian? Answered. By a Lover of Free Grace* (London: Whitfield, 1798).

factors need to be acknowledged if one is going to understand why Evangelicalism's hold on the American mind has been profound to say the least.

Why did Lincoln, though never a church member, use the Bible more freely in this speech (Second Inaugural Address) and also address questions of theological significance more directly than his near-peers as heads of state in other Protestant lands who were more dedicated members of Christian churches like William Gladstone in Britain or Abraham Kuyper in the Netherlands?... By the early nineteenth century, a surprising intellectual synthesis, distinctly different from the reigning intellectual constructs in comparable Western societies, had come to prevail throughout the United States.... The synthesis was a compound of evangelical Protestant religion, [civic] republican political ideology, and [Scottish] commonsense moral reasoning. Through the time of the Civil War, that synthesis defined the boundaries for a vast quantity of American thought, while also providing an ethical framework, a moral compass, and a vocabulary of suasion for much of the nation's public life. It set, quite naturally, the boundaries within which formal theological effort took place. Since the Civil War, the synthesis has declined in importance for both formal thought and public life, though not without leaving an enduring stamp upon the mental habits of some religious communities and episodic marks upon public discourse.... The process by which evangelical Protestantism came to be aligned with republican convictions and commonsense moral reasoning was also the process that gave a distinctively *American* shape to Christian theology by the time of the civil war.<sup>41</sup>

Despite the decline of this synthesis, Arminianism or at least Arminian-like theologies have continued to evolve and leave their mark on American religious thought. Nevertheless, an apologist for a return to Classical Arminianism, Roger Olsen, states:

One of the most prevalent myths spread by some Calvinists about Arminianism is that it is the most popular type of theology in evangelical pulpits and pews. My experience contradicts this belief. Much depends on how we regard Arminian theology. The Calvinist critic would be correct if Arminianism were semi-Pelagianism. But it is not, as I hope to show. The gospel preached and the doctrine of salvation taught in most evangelical pews, is not classical Arminianism but semi-Pelagianism if not outright Pelagianism.... Today, semi-Pelagianism is the default theology of most American evangelical Christians. This is revealed in the popularity of clichés such as “If you'll take one step towards God, he'll come the rest of the way towards you,” and “God votes for you, Satan votes against you, and you get the deciding vote,” coupled with the almost total neglect of human depravity and helplessness in spiritual matters.<sup>42</sup>

One of the clearest examples of this is Charles Finney (1792–1875), who is still celebrated by Evangelicals as the “Father of Modern Revivalism.” His new measures, which sought to

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<sup>41</sup> Noll, *America's God*, 7, 9, 11.

<sup>42</sup> Olson, *Arminian*, 30–31.

choreograph and market conversion, have continued to be developed by revivalists, Evangelicals, and mega-churches today. But what is often overlooked is the Semi-Pelagian presuppositions that form the skeleton of Finney's new measures. He taught that "religion is the work of man," and that "a revival of religion is not a miracle," but rather "a revival is the result of the *right* use of the appropriate means."<sup>43</sup> He called original sin "an anti-scriptural and nonsensical dogma."<sup>44</sup> In an attempt to negotiate between limited atonement and universal salvation, Finney rejected substitutionary atonement, for the moral government theory of atonement: "If he [Christ] had obeyed the Law as our substitute, then why should our own return to personal obedience be insisted upon as a *sine qua non* of our salvation."<sup>45</sup> Finally his Pelagian tinged Semi-Pelagianism is demonstrated by his conception of regeneration: "Regeneration consists in the sinner changing his ultimate choice, intention, preference; or in changing from selfishness to love or benevolence."<sup>46</sup>

If Evangelicals have managed to soften Finney's rhetoric, they have also moved beyond him in new ways. Two of the newest doctrinal developments in Evangelicalism are dual-covenant theology and Christian Universalism. Dual-covenant theology teaches that Jews can be saved by adherence to the old covenant of the Torah, while Christians must be saved by the new covenant of Christ. San Antonio non-denominational Evangelical, John Hagee, has expressed such sentiments in interviews and books.<sup>47</sup> Christian Universalism, conversely, posits that there can be salvation at least for some outside of the Torah or Christ. Both Billy Graham and Joel Osteen have asserted this position in live television interviews.<sup>48</sup> Now both of these theories could be predicated on a sort of grace based system, but it appears that human merit

<sup>43</sup> Charles Finney, *Lectures on Revivals of Religion*, 2d. ed. (New York: Leavitt, Lord & Co., 1935), 9, 12.

<sup>44</sup> Charles Finney, *Finney's Systematic Theology* (Bloomington: Bethany House Publishers, 1976), 179.

<sup>45</sup> Finney, *Finney's*, 206.

<sup>46</sup> Finney, *Finney's*, 224

<sup>47</sup> The *Houston Chronicle* quotes Hagee saying, "In fact, trying to convert Jews is a 'waste of time,' he said. The Jewish person who has his roots in Judaism is not going to convert to Christianity. There is no form of Christian evangelism that has failed so miserably as evangelizing the Jewish people. They (already) have a faith structure.' Everyone else, whether Buddhist or Baha'i, needs to believe in Jesus, he says. But not Jews. Jews already have a covenant with God that has never been replaced by Christianity, he says. 'The Jewish people have a relationship to God through the law of God as given through Moses,' Hagee said. 'I believe that every Gentile person can only come to God through the cross of Christ. I believe that every Jewish person who lives in the light of the Torah, which is the word of God, has a relationship with God and will come to redemption.' 'The law of Moses is sufficient enough to bring a person into the knowledge of God until God gives him a greater revelation. And God has not,' said Hagee, giving his interpretation of Romans 11:25. 'Paul abandoned the idea (of Jews knowing Christ). In the book of Romans, he said, "I am now going to the Gentiles from this time forward." Judaism doesn't need Christianity to explain its existence. But Christianity has to have Judaism to explain its existence.'" See Julia Duin, "San Antonio Fundamentalist Battles Anti-Semitism," *Houston Chronicle* (April 30, 1988), sec. 6, p. 1. See also the tenth chapter of John Hagee's unrevised *In Defense of Israel: The Bible's Mandate for Supporting the Jewish State*, First Edition (Lake Mary: Frontline, 2007).

<sup>48</sup> In 1997 television interview, Robert Schuller asked Billy Graham, "Tell me, what do you think is the future of Christianity?" Graham responded, "Well, Christianity and being a true believer—you know, I think there's the Body of Christ. This comes from all the Christian groups around the world, outside the Christian groups. I think everybody that loves Christ, or knows Christ, whether they're conscious of it or not, they're members of the Body of Christ... I think James answered that, the Apostle James in the first council in Jerusalem, when he said that God's purpose for this age is to call out a people for His name. And that's what God is doing today, He's calling people out of the world for His name, whether they come from the Muslim world, or the Buddhist world, or the Christian world, or the non-believing world, they are members of the Body of Christ, because they've been called by God. They may not even know the name of Jesus, but they know in their hearts that they need something that they don't have, and they turn to the only light that they have, and I think they are saved, and that they're going to be with us in heaven." Schuller continued, "What, what I hear you saying, that it's possible for Jesus Christ to come into human hearts and soul and life, even if they've been born in darkness and have never had exposure to the Bible. Is that a correct interpretation of what you're saying?" Graham replied, "Yes, it is, because I believe that. I've met people in various parts of the world in tribal situations, that they have never seen a Bible or heard about a Bible, and never heard of Jesus, but they've believed in their hearts that there was a God, and they've tried to live a life that was quite apart from the surrounding community in which they lived." See Billy Graham, interviewed by Robert Schuller, *Hour of Power*, May 31, 1997. See also Joel Osteen, interview by Larry King, *Larry King Live*, June 20, 2005.

plays a critical role in ultimately determining who will be saved outside of Christ in both of these doctrinal developments.

After conducting the broadest study of American adolescent religion and spirituality to date, the latest development in Arminian-like theology has been a move from Experiential Arminianism to what Christian Smith and his fellow researchers with the *National Study of Youth and Religion at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill* have defined as “moralistic therapeutic deism.” Moralistic therapeutic deism envisions God to be a divine therapist most concerned about your personal self-esteem than anything else. The tenets of this new form of religiosity are spelled out below,

1. A god exists who created and ordered the world and watches over human life on earth.
2. God wants people to be good, nice, and fair to each other, as taught in the Bible and by most world religions.
3. The central goal of life is to be happy and to feel good about oneself.
4. God does not need to be particularly involved in one’s life except when God is needed to resolve a problem.
5. Good people go to heaven when they die.<sup>49</sup>

While many might attribute this to a failure on the part of American Christianity to inculcate its faith, one of the members of this research team articulates a very different conclusion. Kendra Dean explains the phenomenon has shown that American Christianity has been all too effective in remolding the next generation in their own image.

The problem does not seem to be that churches are teaching young people badly, but that we are doing an exceedingly good job of teaching youth what we really believe; namely, that Christianity is not a big deal, that God requires little, and the church is a helpful social institution filled with nice people focused primarily on “folks like us”--which, of course, begs the question of whether we are really the church at all. What if the blasé religiosity of most American teenagers is not the result of poor communication but the result of excellent communication of a watered-down gospel so devoid of God’s self-giving love in Jesus Christ, so immune to the sending love of the Holy Spirit that it might not be Christianity at all? What if the church models a way of life that asks, not passionate surrender but ho-hum assent? What if we are preaching moral affirmation, a feel-better faith, and a hands-off God instead of the decisively involved, impossibly loving, radically sending God of Abraham and Mary, who desired us enough to enter creation in Jesus Christ and whose Spirit is active in the church and in the world today?<sup>50</sup>

To be sure, Classical Arminianism still exists in an Experiential Evangelical form in the Wesleyan, Baptist, and non-denominational churches. But the fact that Arminianism has never really known an Orthodoxy, but rather bifurcated into rationalism or experientialism, does not bode well for a renaissance of Classical Arminianism. From an orthodox Lutheran perspective

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<sup>49</sup> Christian Smith and Melinda Denton, *Soul Searching: The Religious and Spiritual lives of American Teenagers* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 162–3.

<sup>50</sup> Kendra Dean, *Almost Christian: What the Faith of our Teenagers is Telling the American Church* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 12.

this survey of Classical Arminianism and some of its manifestations shows exactly why a call for Reformation theology is so imperative in America today. Even at its best Arminianism represents a biblical and pastoral crisis that only Reformation theology can really address. The Lutheran Reformation was at its heart an authentic return to the biblical theology of the church and the application of that theology in pastoral *praxis*. In point of fact, Lutheranism's most theologically penetrating symbol of all, the FC, is fundamentally a pastoral response to the spiritual questions of the day.<sup>51</sup> For this reason, we shall focus on how the FC can help American Lutherans address the tenets of Arminianism.

As mentioned earlier, the FC, much less FC II, cannot address every aspect of Arminianism, both for historical and systematic reasons. The FC was penned long before the Arminian Controversy and some components of Arminianism were not specifically addressed by it. Nevertheless, the controversies addressed by the FC bear a great deal of resemblance to Arminianism and inferences can be drawn from it about how the sacred Scriptures should be brought to bear upon Arminianism. The articles of the FC that address the central tenets of Arminianism are Articles I, II, and XI. It should be noted that FC IV supplements FC II in addressing the Arminian conception of the function of the human will in preserving one in salvation. But article VIII does not specifically address Arminius' type of subordinationism.<sup>52</sup> FC V, VI, VII, VIII, IX, and X, naturally, speak to Arminianism as a part of the broader Reformed tradition. Finally, article XII speaks to some elements of the Radical Reformation that have synthesized with certain expressions of Experiential Arminianism.

The Arminian Controversy emerged within the discussion concerning predestination in Reformed tradition. Jacobus Arminius believed that supralapsarian double predestination was contrary to the foundation of Christianity, salvation, and certainty, not to mention the Gospel, the first six hundred years of patristic theology, and the 1581 *Harmonia Confessionum Fidei Orthodoxarum, & Reformatarum Ecclesiarum* just for starters.<sup>53</sup> For this reason, he asserted a conditional single election on the basis of foreseen faith. In the process of safeguarding the goodness of God, he made the human response to prevenient grace the determining factor in election. Even though the formulators of the FC were aware of John Calvin's conception of election as well as the 1563 controversy in Strassburg between the Reformed Girolamo Zanchi (1516–90) and the Lutheran Johann Marbach (1521–81) concerning election, etc., FC XI was not written to settle any controversy within Lutheranism, but to forestall the emergence of such a controversy in Lutheranism. On the basis of Matthew 10:29, Psalm 139:16, and Isaiah 37:38, FC XI like Arminius distinguished God's foreknowledge (*praescientia vel praevision*) ("that is, that God sees and knows everything before it happens," which "applies to all creatures, good and evil") from a single election grounded in Christ ("that is, God's preordination to salvation," which "does not apply to both the godly and the evil, but instead only to the children of God, who are chosen and predestined to eternal life, 'before the foundation of the world' was laid as Paul says in (Eph.1[:4, 5]).")<sup>54</sup> While Calvinism is not specifically mentioned and would have

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<sup>51</sup> Timothy Wengert, *A Formula for Parish Practice: Using the Formula of Concord in Congregations* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2006).

<sup>52</sup> Johann Quenstedt refutes Arminius' subordinationism in his *Theologia didactico-polemica, sive systema theologicum* (Wittenberg: Henckel, 1685), I, 376–377.

<sup>53</sup> Arminius, *The Writings*, 1:618–22. See also *Harmonia Confessionum Fidei Orthodoxarum, & Reformatarum Ecclesiarum, quae, in praecipuis quibusque Europae Regnis, Nationibus, & Provinciis, sacram Evangelij doctrinam pure profitentur: Quorum catalogum & ordinem sequentes paginae indicabunt* (Geneva: Santandreanum, 1581).

<sup>54</sup> FC SD XI, 4–8.

denied that its conception of election made God the author of evil, FC XI, like Arminius, rejected double predestination<sup>55</sup> and insisted that God is not the author of evil on basis of Psalm 5:4 and Luther's translation of Hosea 13:9, "Israel, you bring yourself into misfortune, but your salvation is found in me alone."<sup>56</sup> In this same regard, FC XI discouraged speculation into the hidden mind of God, lest one might fall on one hand into "false security and impenitence" or on the other hand into "faintheartedness and despair."<sup>57</sup> Even more important than FC XI's affirmation of single election grounded in Christ over against double predestination,<sup>58</sup> is its pastoral focus on the outline of the book of Romans and the universal promise of the Gospel in the means of grace. This scriptural and pastoral quality was lacking in both the Calvinist tradition, which pointed parishioners to their works to make their election sure and the Arminian tradition, which pointed parishioners to their decision and the inward testimony of the Spirit to make their election sure. In contradistinction, FC XI states,

Now, God does not call apart from means. He calls through the Word, which he has commanded us to preach, the word of repentance and the forgiveness of sins [Luke 24:47]. St. Paul also testifies to this very thing when he writes, "We are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal through us; we entreat you on behalf of Christ be reconciled to God" (2 Cor. 5[:20]).... Therefore, if we want to consider our eternal election to salvation profitably, we must also firmly and rigidly insist that, like the proclamation of repentance, so the promise of the gospel is *universalis*, that is, it pertains to all people (Luke 24[:47]). Therefore, Christ commanded preaching "repentance and the forgiveness of sins in his name to all nations."<sup>59</sup>

By making this pastoral move, the FC refocused the Christian on God's universal promise of the Gospel in the means of grace as well as restored the comfort of the doctrine of election as expressed in Romans 8:29-39.<sup>60</sup> At the same time, it made it possible to still remind the spiritually idle of the sacred Scriptures' (2 Timothy 3:16) function as a basis "for reproof, for correction, for improvement." Similarly, it located damnation in the despising of God's Word (Matthew 23:37), and it recalled the example of Pharaoh as a warning that God can harden the hearts of persistent despisers of God's Word.<sup>61</sup>

It is also well-known that Lutheran Orthodoxy developed a formulation of the doctrine of election that looks very similar to Arminius' conception of election in view of foreseen faith. Even though some have tried to trace the Lutheran orthodox position back into the FC, we have already seen that the FC confessed a single election in Christ not *an election in view of foreseen faith*. Still it is important to show the Lutheran orthodox position was never intended to foment synergism, even if some in Late Orthodoxy would eventually take it in that direction. On the basis of a problematic exegesis of passages like Ephesians 1:4, 2 Thessalonians 2:13, and Romans 8:29-30, orthodox Lutherans following the Swabian Wittenberg theology professor, Aegidius Hunnius (1550-1603), would come to speak about God's *absolute or antecedent will* to save all and

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<sup>55</sup> FC SD XI, 80-82.

<sup>56</sup> FC SD XI, 6-7, 62.

<sup>57</sup> FC SD XI, 9-11, 13, 26, 55, 58.

<sup>58</sup> FC SD XI, 5, 8, 88.

<sup>59</sup> FC SD XI, 27-29, 33-40, 76.

<sup>60</sup> FC SD XI, 48

<sup>61</sup> FC SD XI, 12, 41-42, 73, 78, 84-85.

his *ordinate or consequential will* to elect some *in consideration of or in view of faith (ex praevisa fidei or intuitu fidei)*.<sup>62</sup> In the Lutheran mind, both Calvinism and the Swiss Wittenberg theology professor, Samuel Huber (1547–1624), located election in the antecedent will of God, albeit they rejected the distinction between God’s antecedent and consequential will altogether. To resolve this issue, Lutherans introduced this conceptual distinction in God’s will to preserve on one hand universal grace against Calvinism’s notion of an absolute, unconditional, or bare election. In addition, it was intended to maintain on the other hand a real or limited election against Samuel Huber’s universal election. Despite the inherent problems with this move beyond the *Formula of Concord*, the orthodox Lutherans were not synergists, because they maintained that the faith in question was the full and complete creation of the Holy Spirit alone.<sup>63</sup> For example, the Jena divine, Johann Gerhard (1582–1637), writes,

Therefore we have shown that the merit of Christ is the cause of our election. But since the merit of Christ is of no use to anyone without faith, therefore we say, that the consideration of faith (*fidei intuitum*) must be included in the decree of election. With one voice we confess, that we teach, that God will find nothing good in man to elect him to eternal life, that there is no good work, use of free will, or even faith itself that he looked back on, that moved him or on account of which he elected certain ones: but we say that this is entirely and only the merit of Christ, on whose worth he looked back on and it was by grace alone that the decree of election was made. Nevertheless, because the merits of Christ only have a place in man through faith, therefore we say, that the election happened in view of the merit of Christ apprehended through faith. Therefore we say that all those and these alone have been elected from all eternity by God to salvation who he foresaw that they would by the power of Holy Spirit through the ministry of the Gospel truly believe in Christ, the redeemer, and preserve in faith until the end of their lives.<sup>64</sup>

As result of this formulation, Calvinist theologians nearly equated the orthodox Lutheran position on election in view of faith with the later Arminian position, which the Calvinists deemed Pelagian. While not accepting the Reformed tendency to equate Lutheranism and Arminianism, Lutherans used the Calvinist’s trial of Arminianism at Dordrecht as proof that the

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<sup>62</sup> Aegidius Hunnius, *Articvlvs De Providentia Dei et Aeterna Praedestinatione Sev Electione filiorum Dei ad salutem* (Frankfurt: Becker, 1603), Synopsis.

<sup>63</sup> See Robert Kolb, *Bound Choice, Election, and Wittenberg Theological Method: From Martin Luther to the Formula of Concord* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2005), 266; Robert Preus, “The Doctrine of Election as Taught by the Seventeenth Century Lutheran Dogmaticians,” *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly* (1958), 229–61; Gottfried Adam, *Der Streit um die Prädestination im ausgehenden 16. Jahrhundert: Eine Untersuchung zu den Entwürfen von Samuel Huber und Aegidius Hunnius* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1970); Rune Söderlund, *Ex Praevisa Fidei: Zum Verständnis der Prädestinationslehre in der lutherischen Orthodoxie* (Hannover: Lutherisches Verlagshaus, 1983).

<sup>64</sup> Johann Gerhard writes, “Atque ita confirmatum dedimus, quod Christi meritum sit causa electionis nostrae. Cum vero Christi meritum nemini prosit absque fidei ideo dicimus, etiam fidei intuitum decreto electionis esse includendum. Sonora voce profiteamur, nos statuere, quod Deus nihil boni in homine ad vitam aeternam eligendo invenerit, quod nec bona opera nec liberi arbitrii usum neque adeo ipsam etiam fidem ita respexerit, ut hisce motus, vel propter ea quosdam elegerit: sed unicum et solum Christi meritum illud esse dicimus, cuius dignitatem Deus respexerit et ex mera gratia decretum electionis fecerit. Quia tamen Christi meritum non nisi per fidem in hominibus locum habet, idea docemus, electionem factam intuitu meriti Christi per fidem apprehendendi. Illos ergo omnes et solos ab aeterno a Deo ad salutem electos esse dicimus, quos efficacia Spiritus sancti per ministerium evangelii in Christum redemptorem vere credituros et in fide usque ad vitae finem permansuros praevidit.” See *Loci theologici cum pro abstruenda veritate tum pro destruenda quorumvis contradicentium falsitate per theses nervose solide et copiose explicati*, ed. Ed. Preuss (Berlin: Gust. Schlawitz, 1863–85), 7, § 161.

Reformed were being disingenuous about their repeated irenic contention that fundamental unity existed between them and the Church of the Augsburg Confession.<sup>65</sup> In the end the potential pitfalls of election in view of faith were exploited by such Lutherans as the Helmstedt theology professor and Lutheran irenicist, Georg Calixt (1586–1656), and the Jena theology professor and father-in-law of Johann Baier (1647–95), Johannes Musaeus (1613–81). They would make the merit of Christ apprehended by faith a lesser impelling principle cause of election (*causa impulsiva minus principalis*)<sup>66</sup> and come to teach a synergistic conception of election in view of faith.<sup>67</sup>

At the heart of Arminius' conception of election was a synergistic anthropology that shifted the deciding variable in one's salvation from Christ to the human will. The FC discusses anthropology in two interrelated articles, FC I and FC II, which focus on original sin and free will respectively. The controversies behind these two articles have their origin in the writings of Philipp Melancthon (1497–1560), but the controversies really only emerged in the aftermath of the Philippists so-called 1548 Leipzig Interim, which inaugurated the Late Reformation controversies resolved by the FC. Melancthon's distaste for stoic fatalism, the Peasants' War, and his pedagogical interest in human improvement lead him to make synergistic statements. Some of his statements such as the three causes of conversion (the Spirit, the Word, and the human will) could be defended by the formulators and retained in the Torgau Book for two reasons: First, the human will could be understood as the passive material on which the Spirit and the Word, the efficient and instrumental causes respectively, worked actively upon in conversion. Second, the term *conversion* was treated as a synonym of *repentance*, and therefore it did not just refer to the transition from the unregenerate state to the regenerate state, but also to the regenerate's continual or daily renewal.<sup>68</sup> Other statements were harder to explain away

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<sup>65</sup> Francis Turretin (1623–87), *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, trans. George Giger (Phillipsburg: P & R Publishing, 1992), 1:355–64; Nikolaus Hunnius (1585–1643), *Diaskepsis Theologica: A Theological Examination of the Fundamental Difference between Evangelical Lutheran Doctrine and Calvinist or Reformed Teaching*, trans. Richard J. Dinda (Malone: Repristination Press, 1999), dedication, § 520–521. See also August Pfeiffer (1640–98), *Anti-Calvinism*, trans. Edward Pfeiffer (Columbus: Printing House of the Joint Synod of Ohio, 1881), 162–94.

<sup>66</sup> Abraham Calov opposed making the merit of Christ apprehended by faith an impelling cause of election against Johannes Musaeus and notes its similarities with Arminianism. See his *Systema Locorum Theologicorum, E Sacra Potissimum Scriptura, & Antiquitate, Nec Non Adversariorum Confessione, Doctrinam, Praxin & Controversiarum Fidei, Cum Veterum, Tum Imprimis Recentiorum, Pertractationem Luculentam Exhibens* (Wittenberg: Hartmann and Wilcke, 1655–1677), 10:629–32. See also Johann Baier, *Compendium Theologiae Positivae Secundum Editionem Anni 1694*, ed. Ed. Preuss (Berlin: Schlawitz, 1864), 571–75. A latent synergism is evident in David Hollaz. He writes, "Resp. Dist. inter resistentiam naturalem & malitiosam. Illam Spiritus S. per gratiam praevenientem frangit & refranat: haec in allis hominibus minor, in allis major & ferocior est, quae saepe impedit, quo minus vera fides in corde homini irrogeniti accendatur." See *Examen Theologicum Acroamaticum Universam Theologiam Thetico-Polemicam* (Stargrad: Ernesti, 1707), 3.1.1.9. See also Baier, *Compendium*, 436.

<sup>67</sup> Georg Calixt, "Epitome Theologiae 1619," in *Dogmatische Schriften*, vol. 2 of *Werke in Auswahl*, ed. Inge Mager (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1982), 181–88. The Electoral Saxon *Consensus Reptitus* charges the following statement from the *Epitome Theologiae* with synergism, "Certum est hominem posse esse suscipere curam de mediis ad eam: Hoc qui faciunt, eos Deus majoribus auxiliis dignatur, ut intelligant verbum &c. Et hoc ab homine praestari vult, priusquam ipsi majora & specialiora, & suo genere supernaturalia suppeditet auxilia Iterum: Non negamus, esse quodam actus in hominis potestate sitos quos ab ipso Deus praestari velit, priusquam ad auxilia & dona supernaturalia progressus fiat." See J. N. J. *Consensus Repetitus Fidei Vere Lutheranae In illis Doctrinae capitibus, Quae Contra puram, & invariata Augustanam Confessionem, aliosque; libros symbolicos, in Formulae Concordiae comprehensos, scriptis publicis impugnant D. Georgius Calixtus, Professor Helmstadiensis, eiusdemque complices. In gratiam Eorum, qui distantiam D. Calixti, Rintelensium, & aliorum Novatorum a fide Lutheranae in Synopsi intueri discipiunt, Ob praesentem Ecclesiae necessitatem, seorsim editus*, ed. Abraham Calov (Wittenberg: Borckard, 1666), XII, 2.

<sup>68</sup> The Torgau Book reads, "Also auch wenn man drei Ursachen der Buße oder Besserung und ander guten Werk und tugenden zusammensetzt, ist solchs recht und eigentlich zu erklären. Dann die weil das ganze Leben eines Christenmenschen in dem nach der ersten [Geburt] Wiedergeburt viel Gebrechen und Sünden übrig bleiben, ein täglich und stets währende Buß und Besserung des Lebens ist darin des Menschen bekehrter und neugeschaffener Wille nicht ganz kraftlos und müßig ist, auch nicht mehr dem Heiligen Geist widerstrebet, sondern neben dem Heiligen Geist mitwirkt, so werden drei Ursachen der Besserung des

such as Melancthon's use of Pseudo-Basil's (300–360) (Eusebius of Emesa) remark, "The human will is not idle in conversion but also does something," or John Chrysostom's (349–407) remark, "God draws [those who come to him], but he draws those who will it."<sup>69</sup> In addition, the Leipzig Interim had asserted, "Nonetheless the merciful God does not deal with human creatures as with a block of wood but draws them in such a manner that their will cooperates, if they are of the age of reason. They do not receive Christ's benefits if the will and heart are not moved by prevenient grace, so that they stand in fear of God's wrath and detest sin."<sup>70</sup> Two of Melancthon's students, Victor Strigel (1524–69) and Johann Pfeffinger (1493–1573), would further develop his positions into full blown synergism. Strigel posited that original sin was a mere accident (*accidens*), and affirmed a human mode of acting (*modus agendi*) in spiritual matters prior to conversion to the exclusion of divine coercion against Matthias Flacius (1520–75), who taught that original sin had become the formal substance (*substantia formalis*) of man, albeit not a material substance. Pfeffinger defended his synergism against Nikolaus von Amsdorf (1483–65).

Now Arminius and his Calvinist opponents could agree to the following:

...this also is an indisputable, incontrovertible axiom in theology, that each *substantia* or independent essence, insofar as it is a substance, is either God himself or a product and creation of God. Thus, in his many writing against Manichaeans, Augustine, along with all faithful teachers, after serious deliberation, condemned and rejected the expression,... "original sin is the nature and essence of the human being." All scholars and intelligent people have always held to this: that whatever does not exist in and of itself or is not a part of another independent essence, but may change as it exists in something else is not a *substantia* (that is, something self-subsistent), but is an *accidens* (that is, something contingent).<sup>71</sup>

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Lebens und des neuen Gehorsams und aller guten Werke in den Wiedergeborenen, nämlich der Heilige Geist die Betrachtung des göttlichen Wortes und unsers neuen wiedergeborenen Willens Fleiß und Mitwirkung wohl und christliche zusammengesetzt. Aber doch eigentlich zu reden, ist allein Gott der Heilige Geiste die wahre wirkliche Ursach oder causa efficiens principalis; der solche mit seiner kraft alles wirket. Das gepredigte Wort aber ist das Mittel oder Instrument dardurch der Heilige Geiste den Menschen bekehret und in ihm wirket; das menschen Herz und Will aber ist das subjectum oder causa materialis, in qua efficax est et operatur Spiritus sanctus et quae ad Deum conversa et a spiritu sancto acta simul agit sicut Augustinus loquitur... Wenn man aber der primo motu conversionis, das ist, von dem Anfang unser Bekehrung und also von den Urachen handelt,... so ist allein der Heilige Geist die Ursache, welcher solche unsere Bekehrung schafft. Das Wort ist das Mittel oder Werkzeug, dardurch der Heilige Geiste die Bekehrung wirket; der menschliche und natürliche, unwiedergeborne Wille aber ist in keinem Wege causa vel efficiens vel adiuvens primae conversionis, das ist, keine Ursache, so die Wiedergeburt wirket oder zu derselbigen unserer ersten Wiedergeburt etwas helfen sollte, sonder materia in qua oder subiectum convertendum, das ist, anders nicht denn das so bekehret werden soll, darin der heilige Geist der Bekehrung und andre geistliche Bewegung wirket und anzündet, uf die Weise, wie oben im vierten Stück dieses Artikuls nach der Länge erkläret ist." See Torgau Book on three causes reprinted in BSLK, 910–11, Critical Apparatus. See also FC SD II, 90; Philipp Melancthon, "Enarratio Symboli Niceni," in *Corpus Reformatorum. Philippi Melancthonis opera quae superseset omnia*, ed. Karl Bretschneider and Heinrich Bindweil (Halle: Schwetschke, 1834–60), 23:280. Philipp Melancthon, *Loci Communes 1543*, trans. J. A. O. Preus (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1992), 43; Martin Chemnitz, *Loci Theologici*, trans. J. A. O. Preus (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1989), 2:250, 2:602; Lowell Green, "The Three Causes of Conversion in Philipp Melancthon, Martin Chemnitz, David Chytraeus, and the Formula of Concord," *Lutherjahrbuch* (1980): 89–114.

<sup>69</sup> FC SD II, 86; Philipp Melancthon, *Melancthon on Christian Doctrine: Loci Communes 1555*, trans. Clyde Manschreck (New York: Oxford University Press, 1965), 60; Melancthon, *Loci Communes 1543*, 43.

<sup>70</sup> The *Leipzig Interim* is reprinted in Robert Kolb and James Nestingen, eds., *Sources and Contexts of the Book of Concord* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001), 185.

<sup>71</sup> FC SD I, 1, 55.

They could also all affirm that “even after the fall, God is the creator of human beings,” that “original sin does not come from God,” and that original sin was not the essence or substance of man on the grounds of Job 10:8-12, Psalm 139:14-16, and Ecclesiastes 12:7.<sup>72</sup> While this designation was well-intentioned and not meant to invoke even a hint of Manichianism on the part of Flacius, the Aristotelian substance-accident framework made it impossible to really affirm that original sin was a formal substance and still avoid the charge that God became, as a result, the author of evil.<sup>73</sup> But this Flacian terminology had another problem. It conflicted with Lutheran Christology, which confessed with Gregory of Nazianzus (329–90) the axiom: Christ redeems that which he assumed.<sup>74</sup> On basis of Hebrew 2:17, “he [Christ] ‘became one of us, in every respect like us’ apart from sin,” FC I shored up its position by pressing the Flacian terminology to the absurd (*reductio ad absurdum*): If man's substance was sin, then “Christ either did not assume our nature because he had not assumed our sin, or because he assumed our nature, he would also have assumed sin.”<sup>75</sup> Finally to alleviate any confusion about terminology FC I pointed out that the term *nature* could refer to both *substance* and *character*, and showed that Martin Luther had only used it in the latter sense when he said that “sin and sinning are the character and nature of the corrupted human being.”<sup>76</sup>

Unlike the FC, Arminius could only have accepted the following: “The description of original sin deprives the unrenewed human nature of the gifts, powers, and all capacity to initiate and effect anything in spiritual matters,” provided that this meant without prevenient grace.<sup>77</sup> Therefore he also could not really have affirmed that original sin was far more than a mere accident (*corruptio tantum accidentium aut qualitatum*) in the same manner as FC I did.<sup>78</sup> While FC I recognizes that “in other – natural, external – matters, which are subject to reason, the human being retains to a certain extent, its understanding, powers, and abilities – even though greatly weakened,”<sup>79</sup> it is fully aware that original sin is a “horrible, dreadful, inherited disease corrupting [man’s] entire nature,”<sup>80</sup> and not merely “a deprivation or lack of spiritual powers.”<sup>81</sup>

The Holy Scripture testifies that original sin is an indescribable impairment and a corruption of human nature so deep that nothing pure and good remains in it or in any of its internal and external powers. Instead, all is so deeply corrupted because of this original sin that human beings are truly spiritually dead in God’s sight, having died, with all their powers, to the good.<sup>82</sup>

Thus FC I maintained the fundamental goodness of God and his creation without leading man to take away from the goodness of Christ and it affirmed the carnality of man without

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<sup>72</sup> FC SD I, 1, 33–42.

<sup>73</sup> FC SD I, 7.

<sup>74</sup> Martin Chemnitz writes, “Moreover, the statement of Nazianzus is most significant, a statement which all antiquity accepted, namely that that part of the human nature ‘which was not assumed by Christ was not healed’ (to avpro,slhpton avqera,peuton).” See his *The Two Natures of Christ*, tr. J. A. O. Preus (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1971), 60.

<sup>75</sup> FC SD I, 43–44. See also FC SD II, 81.

<sup>76</sup> FC SD I, 51, 6.

<sup>77</sup> FC SD I, 10.

<sup>78</sup> FC SD I, 21.

<sup>79</sup> FC SD I, 12.

<sup>80</sup> FC SD I, 5.

<sup>81</sup> FC SD I, 22.

<sup>82</sup> FC SD I, 60.

undermining the incarnation of Christ. It further insisted that as important as a proper understanding of substance and accident is to theologically defining original sin: "Holy Scripture alone provides a full understanding and explanation" of original sin.<sup>83</sup> In typical pastoral fashion, it advises that these terms should be avoided "in public preaching to the uninstructed, because such words are unfamiliar to the common people."<sup>84</sup>

In contradistinction to the previous two articles there is little that Arminius could affirm in FC II with the notable exception of its condemnation of Pelagianism and Semi-Pelagianism.<sup>85</sup> This article strikes at the heart of Arminianism. FC II begins by laying out the four Augustinian states of man: "before the fall," "after the fall," "after they have been reborn," and "when they arise from the dead." The article then centers on "what the mind and the will of the unregenerated human beings are able to do in conversion and rebirth on the basis of their own powers that remain after the fall, when God's Word is proclaimed and God's grace is offered to us."<sup>86</sup> In response to this question, FC II puts to rest any notions of Semi-Pelagianism and synergism.

This means that in this human nature, after the fall and before rebirth, there is not a spark of spiritual power left or present with which human beings can prepare themselves for the grace of God or accept grace as it is offered.... Nor do they have the ability, on the basis of their own powers, to help, act, effect, or cooperate—completely, halfway, or in the slightest, most insignificant way—in their own conversion; they cannot bring about or cooperate in it "of ourselves, as coming from us" [2 Cor. 3:5.]. Rather they are "the slave of sin" (John 8[:34]) and prisoners of the devil, by whom they are driven (Eph. 2[:2]; 2 Tim. 2[:26]). Therefore, according to its own perverted character and nature, the natural free will has only the power and ability to do whatever is displeasing and hostile to God.<sup>87</sup>

Lest there be any lingering confusion about synergism, FC II adds "on the basis of its own natural powers the free will not only cannot effect anything or cooperate in any way in its own conversion or in the attaining of righteousness and salvation: it cannot follow the Holy Spirit (who offers grace and salvation through the Gospel), believe in him, or give him its 'yes.'"<sup>88</sup> To facilitate this restoration of a proper explication of the human will in conversion, FC II tackled a number of problematic phrases and concepts that had arisen. It rejects the idea that man possesses an ability to dispose himself to grace (*facultas applicandi se ad gratia*),<sup>89</sup> and the notion that man possesses a human mode of acting (*modus agendi*) in spiritual matters prior to conversion.<sup>90</sup> It insists that the synergistic remarks of Pseudo-Basil and Chrysostom are "not compatible with the form of sound teaching,"<sup>91</sup> and discourages the use of the three causes of

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<sup>83</sup> FC SD I, 60.

<sup>84</sup> FC SD I, 54.

<sup>85</sup> FC Ep II, 9–11; FC SD II, 74–77. The FC considered the Nominalist version of Semi-Pelagianism to be an outgrowth of the Semi-Pelagianism condemned at the Council of Orange (529), and associated with John Cassian (360–435) and the monks around Marseilles. The FC Ep also appears to have coined the term *Semi-Pelagianism*.

<sup>86</sup> FC SD II, 2.

<sup>87</sup> FC SD II, 7.

<sup>88</sup> FC SD II, 18.

<sup>89</sup> FC SD II, 78.

<sup>90</sup> FC SD II, 61.

<sup>91</sup> FC SD II, 86.

conversion because it misled students.<sup>92</sup> But it affirms Luther's notion that "human beings conduct themselves in their conversion *pure passive* (that is, they do absolutely nothing at all)."<sup>93</sup> FC II even provides illustrations of the human condition, so that all segments of society could deal with this challenging article of the faith. FC II states, "Holy Scripture compares the unregenerated heart to a hard stone [Ezek. 36:26; Jer. 5:3], which does not yield when touched but resists, or to an unhewn block of wood [Hos. 6:5], or to a wild, ferocious beast [Ps. 73:22],"<sup>94</sup> but it also makes its readers aware that the former two metaphors limp because "a stone or a block of wood does not resist the person who moves it; neither does it understand or feel what is being done to it."<sup>95</sup> Just in case someone might deduce from all this that God then must coerce the human will into conversion—a charge Arminius would levy against the Calvinists—FC II carefully refutes such a claim.

Although God does not force human beings in such a way that they must become godly..., nonetheless God the Lord draws those people whom he wants to convert and does so in such a way that an enlightened understanding is fashioned out of a darkened understanding and an obedient will is fashioned out of a rebellious will.<sup>96</sup>

Much like FC XI, FC II navigates a narrow scriptural heading between the Scylla of Calvinism and the Charybdis of Arminianism. Both ultimately end up grounding the hope of salvation in the experience of man. The FC counsels Christians against such navel gazing once again by appealing to the means of grace.

Therefore, neither the preacher nor the hearer should doubt this grace and activity of the Holy Spirit, but they should be certain that when the Word of God is preached purely and clearly according to God's command and will and people listen to it seriously and diligently and meditate upon it, God will certainly be present with his grace.... For the presence, effectiveness, and gift of the Holy Spirit should not and cannot always be assessed *ex sensu*, as a person feels it in the heart. Instead, because the Holy Spirit's activity is often hidden under the cover of great weakness, we should be certain, on the basis of and according to the promise, that the Word of God when preached and heard, is a function of the Holy Spirit, through which he is certainly present in our hearts and exercises his power there (2 Corinthians 2 [I Corinthians 2:11ff. or 2 Cor. 3:5-6]).<sup>97</sup>

Now when it comes the third state of man, FC II recognizes that the regenerate will possess a limited synergy or ability to cooperate with the Holy Spirit in the performance of good works. It cautions the Christian against misinterpreting this new relationship with the analogy of two equal horses pulling a cart.<sup>98</sup> In anticipation of FC IV on good works, FC II

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<sup>92</sup> FC SD II, 90.

<sup>93</sup> FC SD II, 89.

<sup>94</sup> FC SD II, 19.

<sup>95</sup> FC SD II, 59.

<sup>96</sup> FC SD II, 60, 64

<sup>97</sup> FC SD II, 55, 48, 80.

<sup>98</sup> FC SD II, 65-66.

safeguards God's grace by preempting the notion seemingly latent in Arminianism that human will is empowered by God's grace to preserve one in salvation through works.

Holy Scripture ascribes conversion, faith in Christ, rebirth, renewal, and everything that belongs to the actual beginning and completion of these things, not to the human powers of natural free will—neither totally, halfway, somewhat, nor in the slightest and smallest bit—but rather ascribes all this *in solidum* (that is, complete and totally) to divine activity and to the Holy Spirit alone, as the Apology says [XVIII, 7, 8].<sup>99</sup>

Unlike Arminius, FC II takes a more decisive stance against the perseverance of the saints: “However, if the baptized act against their conscience, permit sin to reign in them, and thus grieve the Holy Spirit in themselves and lose him, then, although they may not be rebaptized, they must be converted again, as has been demonstrated above.”<sup>100</sup> It likewise dismisses Christian perfectionism, i.e., “the teaching of the popes and monks, that after rebirth human beings can fulfill the law of God completely in this life and through this fulfilling of the law be righteous before God and merit life.”<sup>101</sup> Most surprisingly of all, FC II does all this without trying to undo the tension between the four states of man and spiritual growth on one hand,<sup>102</sup> and need for daily conversion<sup>103</sup> and the fact that man remains both saint and sinner at the same time (*simul iustus et peccator*) on the other hand.<sup>104</sup>

In conclusion, the Evangelical historian, Mark Noll, writes, “Protestantism has been one of the truly formative influences in American history, but in the process much of the original Protestant vision has been modified, distorted, or lost. Lutherans are the major denominational family in the best position to redeem the deficiency.”<sup>105</sup> Lutherans provide “an Augustinian conception of human nature,” “the Reformation conviction about the objectivity of salvation,” a Lutheran ecclesiology to counter the “American weakness simply to think of the church as another voluntary society,” and the “Lutheran gift of ambiguity,” such as, “Luther’s tension with culture, which saw him committed to Christian activity, but always with the sharpest reservations.”<sup>106</sup> But Noll also recognizes that American Lutheranism is suffering from a “waning Lutheran identity” and a “missed opportunity,” considering the large number of Lutherans in America and all that Lutheranism has to offer. Since Lutherans have become too much “at home in the historic American culture,” he fears that Lutherans might never make the contribution that they could.<sup>107</sup> He concludes, “Whether Lutherans are in the position to offer such gifts from

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<sup>99</sup> FC SD II, 25.

<sup>100</sup> FC SD II, 69.

<sup>101</sup> FC SD II, 79.

<sup>102</sup> FC SD II, 70–72.

<sup>103</sup> FC SD II, 68.

<sup>104</sup> FC SD II, 64.

<sup>105</sup> Mark Noll, “American Lutherans Yesterday and Today,” in *Lutherans Today: American Lutheran Identity in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, ed. Richard Cimino (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2003), 20.

<sup>106</sup> Noll, “American Lutherans,” 20–21. See also Noll’s remarks about the contribution Lutheranism’s “dialectical theological framework” could offer to political thought over against Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Calvinist, and Anabaptist politics in Noll, *American*, 224–28.

<sup>107</sup> Noll, “American Lutherans,” 20. Noll writes, “From the beginning of immigration, Lutheranism ministers, no less than their people, were relating old-world-expectation to the circumstances in the New. In particular, they were forced to adjust habits of political deference, aristocratic authority, religious uniformity, and liturgical worship to American tendencies towards democracy, republicanism, religious pluralism, and revivalism.” See Noll, “American Lutherans,” 5. But after surveying the acculturation of Lutheranism, Noll still suggests that the following “judgment could be premature”: “It might be possible, therefore, to conclude that

their own tradition to Americans more generally would seem to depend on two matters: on how much genuine Lutheranism is left in American Lutheranism, and on whether Lutherans can bring this Lutheranism to bear."<sup>108</sup> If the popularity of the new revisionist biography of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, which attempts to remodel him into an Evangelical saint, rather than heed his call for Reformation theology, has anything to say to Lutherans, it is that America's need for a genuine Lutheran theology in the land of Arminianism is all the more imperative.<sup>109</sup> The old Nominalist axiom that once gave Luther such pangs of conscious is knocking once again on our church doors: *God does not deny grace to the one who does what is in him (Facientibus quod in se est, deus non denegat gratiam)*.

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American Lutheranism turned aside from Samuel Schmucker's American modification of Lutheranism in the nineteenth century only to yield to Americanizing pressures in the twentieth century – for the ELCA, becoming less and less distinguishable from older mainline Protestant denominations, and for the LCMS, taking on the colors of American fundamentalism." See Noll, "American Lutherans," 15–16. Similarly Richard Cimino has suggested that American Lutheranism is undergoing an identity crisis: "In 1958 American Lutherans were newsworthy enough to find themselves on the cover of *Time* magazine. They had not done anything sensational, but they stood out in an era when American churches of different denominations were beginning to look and act alike as they moved to suburbia and assimilated to mainstream America. Lutherans were influenced by the same forces, but their strong confessional nature, with a stress on theology rather than practical Christian living, as well as their liturgy and ethnicity, set this tradition apart from other Protestants, suggesting a promising future. They were Protestants with a difference at a time when differences were supposed to be dissolving in the American melting pot. Whether or not the 1950s was a golden age for American Lutheranism, there is the wide perception that the years that have followed are posing serious questions to Lutheran identity." Richard Cimino, ed., *Lutherans Today: American Lutheran Identity in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* (Grand Rapids: William. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2003), ix. See also *The Pieper Lectures: Evangelicalism/Missouri Synod* (St. Louis: Concordia Historical Institute, 2007).

<sup>108</sup> See Noll, "American Lutherans," 21.

<sup>109</sup> Eric Metaxas, *Bonhoeffer: Pastor, Martyr, Prophet, Spy* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2010).