THE SYNOD OF DORDT ON ARMINIAN ANTHROPOLOGY

AZA GOUDRIAAN

Introduction

In the fall of 1618 Festus Hommius, an influential Reformed minister at Leiden, published a book that was meant to provide delegates at the future Synod of Dordt with a documented survey of the controversial issues of the day. This Specimen controversiarum Belgicarum gave the text of all of the 37 articles of the Belgic Confession of Faith with an extensive annotation. Providing a variety of quotations and supporting references, Hommius indicated the points on which Arminian theology differed from orthodox Reformed doctrine. These controversial points were not limited to the well-known five Articles of the Remonstrance (1610) that the Synod of Dordrecht (1618–1619) countered by what later became the ‘five points of Calvinism’. The notion that the whole controversy was about nothing other than these five particular issues was rather, Hommius argued, an inadequate Arminian description of what was actually going on. According to Remonstrants no central Christian articles of faith were involved in the debate. Hommius, however, saw a far more comprehensive antagonism that concerned many other articles of faith in addition to those mentioned in the well-known Remonstrance of 1610. Actually, Hommius contended that the so-called major issue of predestination served as a smokescreen (prophasis) meant to conceal the promotion of some version of Socinian theology.

1 P.J. Wijminga, Festus Hommius (Leiden, 1899), pp. 264–268. Research for this article has been funded by the Netherlands Organization for Scientific Research (NWO), in the context of the research project led by J.A. van Ruler, ‘From Erasmus to Spinoza: Classical and Christian Notions of the Self in Dutch Philosophy, Theology and Letters’ (sub-project ‘Classical Philosophy and Arminian Theology’). I thank Han van Ruler and Ruben Buys, as well as participants in the 2006 conference, for their comments.

2 Festus Hommius, Specimen controversiarum Belgicarum [KB: Knuttel 2718] (Leiden, 1618), p. [i] of the preface to the reader: “Protestantur publice se praeter quinque
Arminian anthropology was certainly an issue over which notable disagreements existed at the time. In fact, questions concerning the abilities of the human being surfaced in more than one of the contentious five points. Most clearly, anthropological issues are connected with the disagreements on Articles three and four of the Remonstrance, which are on faith as a gift of God and on the necessity of grace—a resistible grace, that is. Anthropological issues were also mentioned in Hommius’s Specimen controversiarum Belgicarum. Here they appeared in the discussion of articles fourteen and fifteen of the Belgic Confession, which deal with “the creation, fall and corruption of the human being” and with “original sin.” A few positions mentioned by Hommius can give us a sense of what kind of anthropological views were controversial between Remonstrants and Contra-Remonstrants. These concern intellect and will, and the impact of the Fall in Paradise on the human being. With respect to the human intellect, Hommius mentioned Simon Episcopius’s view that the damage done by sin still leaves intact the ability to understand the Bible concerning spiritual matters: in this regard a special illumination by the Holy Spirit is not needed. Concerning human will Hommius reported the view that it is “not a slave of sin, but free to will good and evil.” That was what he read in the Arminian delegation’s papers at the Conference of The Hague (1611) and also in a tract that he attributed to Henricus Welsing but which was in fact written by Faustus Socinus, and

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4 Hommius, Specimen (see above, n. 2), pp. 37–58. For a critical edition of the Confessio Belgica, see J.N. Bakhuizen van den Brink, De Nederlandse belijdenisgeschriften, in authentieke teksten met inleiding en tekstvergelijkingen, 2nd ed. (Amsterdam, 1976); an English translation can be found in Reformed Confessions Harmonized. With an Annotated Bibliography of Reformed Doctrinal Works, ed. J.R. Beeke and S.B. Ferguson (Grand Rapids, 1999).

5 Hommius, Specimen (see above, n. 2), pp. 41–42, with quotations from various disputations by Episcopius.

in a publication of the Alkmaar minister Adolphus Venator. Concerning
the will Hommius noted that several theologians defended the view that
God’s grace respects human freedom and needs the will’s co-operation.
This he backed up by an extensive series of quotations, from the Armini-
ans at the Conference of The Hague and from Jacob Arminius, Johannes
Arnoldus, Nicolaus Grevinchoven, Conrad Vorstius, and Simon Epis-
copius. With respect to the Fall, Hommius mentioned that according
to Henricus Welsing—that is, the author whom he did not know to be
Faustus Socinus—and Adolphus Venator people are “born with the same
powers to do what is good (viribus ad bonum) with which Adam was
created,” so that as a matter of fact the effects of the Fall are rather limited.

Those who came to the Synod of Dordrecht with Hommius’s book in
their hands could conclude from these few points at least that they were
confronted by what could be called an ‘optimistic’ view of the abilities
of the human being. In this view, the human understanding and will
are considered to be capable of significant accomplishments in spiritual
matters. How did the Synod itself perceive the Arminian anthropology,
and how did it reply to it? In what follows an answer to this question is
sought from the documents (judicia) written by the attending Dutch and
foreign delegations on Articles three and four of the Remonstrance. These
documents are included in the official printed Acta of the Synod. The
Arminian anthropology, in other words, is approached here primarily
from the perspective of how it was reconstructed and assessed at the
Synod of Dordrecht.

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7 Hommius, Specimen (see above, n. 2), p. 43, with references.
8 Hommius, Specimen (see above, n. 2), pp. 44–50.
9 Hommius, Specimen (see above, n. 2), pp. 54–55, with references.
10 A similar use of the term ‘optimism’ is made, for instance, by Friedrich Jodl,
who speaks of “einer mehr optimistischen Auffassung des menschlichen Wesens” that
distinguished the Remonstrants from “der absolute ethische Pessimismus” of Martin
Luther and John Calvin; Geschichte der Ethik als philosophischer Wissenscha-
11 In what follows references are made to the Latin quarto-edition of the Acts, Acta
Synodi Nationalis, in nomine Domini nostri Iesu Christi, autoritate DD. Ordinum Generalium
Foederati Belgii provinciarum, Dordrechti habitae anno MDCXVIII et MDCXIX
(Dordrecht, 1620), hereafter cited as Acta (followed by part number), and to what appears
to be the most recent Dutch printing of the Acts of the Synod: the revised Dutch transla-
tion published in 1885 by J.H. Donner and S.A. van den Hoorn, Acta of Handelingen der
Nationale Synode, in de naam van onze Heere Jezus Christus gehouden door autoriteit der
Hoogmogende Heren Staten-Generaal der Verenigde Nederlanden te Dordrecht in de jaren
The Arminian Documents in the Discussion

First of all, however, a caveat is needed with respect to the Synod’s discussion of Arminian anthropology. Hommius’s book included detailed references to numerous Remonstrant writings, but the views that have been cited above reflect an anthropological optimism that does not seem to fit especially well into the text of Articles three and four of the Remonstrance of 1610, which insist that the human being can “think, will or do . . . nothing good that is truly good” except when he is given grace by God. The Remonstrance, in other words, spoke in a more critical manner about human abilities than did the texts quoted by Hommius. This raises the question: On which Remonstrant writings did the Synod base its judgment?

The answer is that the Synod did not build its judgment on the Remonstrance alone. In Dordrecht the Remonstrants presented several documents explaining their views both on the five Articles and on other issues. In December 1618 they presented documents on their position concerning the five Articles. When the Arminians turned out to be unwilling to comply with the Synod’s demands concerning the presentation of their views, they were dismissed. After that, the States General decided that the discussion would be based upon the Arminians’ “public writings and explanations, written as well as spoken, expressed by them in the past in this National Synod as well as in other provincial synods and elsewhere.” Thus, the Arminian anthropology as discussed by the Synod is based on a much wider range of Arminian accounts than the Remonstrance alone. Some delegations even claimed that the official

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14 See in particular the Remonstrant Acta et scripta synodalia Dordracena ministrorum Remonstrantium in Foederato Belgio (Harderwijk, 1620) [Württembergische Landesbibliothek, Stuttgart].

15 See Handelingen, pp. 120–121 (session 31, on the first article) and 130–136 (session 34, on the other Articles); Acta 1: 125–127 and 129–137.

16 Handelingen, p. 208 (session 64); Acta 1: 227: “. . . ex scriptis eorum publicis atque explicationibus, partim scripto, partim viva voce, tam in Nationali hac, quam in reliquis Provincialibus Synodis et alibi ab ipsis ante expressis.”
text of the Remonstrance sounded more orthodox than the underlying doctrine really was. In January 1619 the Synod decided that its president, Johannes Bogerman, would write a series of theses summarising the Remonstrants’ views. Subsequently, Bogerman’s drafts were discussed in the Synod and agreed upon. The final text remained unprinted throughout the seventeenth-century debates; it was actually published for the first time only in 1937 by D.J. de Groot. In its discussion of Articles three and four this carefully documented text included no references to either the Remonstrance or the documents that the Remonstrants had handed over to the Synod. Most frequently quoted were documents presented at the Conference of The Hague (1611), where the Arminians were represented by Johannes Uytenbogaert, Adriaan Bor (Borrius), Eduard Poppius, Nicolaus Grevinchoven, Johannes Arnoldus (Corvinus), and Simon Episcopius. In addition, the Synod cited other works by Arminius, Arnoldus, Episcopius, Barlaeus, and Grevinchoven.

The judicia of the attending delegations that were printed in the official Acta of the Synod show that the Synod’s assessment of Articles three and four was based on writings by Arminius, Barlaeus, Grevinchoven, Corvinus, Uytenbogaert, on academic disputations of Simon Episcopius, on the Arminian viewpoints that had been presented at the Conference of The Hague in 1611, on the declaration of the Gelderland Arminians concerning the five Articles, and on the documents that the Remonstrants had presented to the Synod. All of these writings were genuinely Arminian. Conrad Vorstius, who was cited by the Emden and South Holland delegations, was probably not a typical Arminian thinker but

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18 D.J. de Groot, ‘Stukken met betrekking tot de opstelling der Dordtsche Canones,’ Bijdragen en mededelingen van het Historisch Genootschap 58 (1937), 134–210; there pp. 144–163, the ‘Articuli pertinentes ad pleniorem explicationem sententiae Remonstrantium …’ I thank Don Sinnema for drawing my attention to these articuli.
19 Three editions of the documents concerning this Conference were quoted by the Synod: Schrifftelike conferentie, gehouden in s’Gravenhaghe inden lare 1611 tuschen sommighe Kercken-dienaren, aengaende de Godliche Praedestinatie metten aenclevens van dien (s Gravenhage, 1612 [Knuttel 1942]); Collatio scripto habita Hagae Comitis anno ab incarnato Domino 1611 inter quosdam Ecclesias de divina Praedestinatione, et ejus appendicibus (Zierikzee, 1615 [Knuttel 2190A]), ed. Henricus Brand; Scripta adversaria collationis Hagiensis, habitae anno MDCXI inter quosdam ecclesiarum pastores de divina praedestinatione et capitibus ei adnexis, quae ex Belgicis autoritate Ill. Hollandiae et Westfrisiae Ordinum iam pridem editis, Latina fecit Petrus Bertius (Leiden, 1615).
20 De Groot, ‘Stukken’ (see above, n. 18), 156–160.
he was quoted only rarely. Among the foreign delegations that discussed Articles three and four, the theologians from the Palatinate, Hesse, and Emden, gave the most extensive references to Remonstrant writings. Among the Dutch delegates, the professors of theology, the delegates from Gelderland, North Holland, Utrecht, and Groningen, stand out for their number of detailed references to various Arminian writings.

The (Three) Powers of the Soul

How did the Synod assess Arminian ‘anthropology’? An answer to this question can be found by focusing on how the human soul and its qualities in the state of sin and of grace are described. In discussing chapters three and four of the Remonstrance not all delegations presented a fully developed theory of what the human soul consists of. All delegations, however, seem to have distinguished between intellect and will. Some delegations listed, with more or less clarity, three powers in the soul: intellect, will, and affections. These three mental powers are mentioned by the delegations from the Palatinate, Switzerland, South Holland, Zeeland, Groningen, and Drenthe. The delegation from North Holland seems to follow the Remonstrants in doing the same. A variation of this tri-partition is found in the distinction between intellect, will, and heart, made by the Hesse delegation, and in the distinction between ‘intellectus, arbitrium, affectus, omnibus viribus’.

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22 Handelingen, p. 480; Acta, 2: 178 (‘renovatur mente, voluntate, affectibus, omnibusviribus’). See, however, Handelingen, p. 481; Acta, 2: 180: intellect (mens), heart and affections (cor et affectus), will (voluntas).


25 Handelingen, p. 794; Acta, 3: 246 (mens, affectus, voluntas, mentioning also omnes animae facultates), and see the Zeeland judgment passim.


lect, will, and all his [that is, the human being’s] powers,” that was made by the delegation from Bremen. The Emden delegation spoke, using flexible terminology, about “intellect, will, and heart,” about “intellect (mens), heart (cor), and affections (affectus),” or about “intellect, heart or will, and all affections.” The Frisian representatives discussed intellect, heart and will, and noted that the latter two—heart and will—are one and the same in the Bible, where the “hair-splitting” distinctions of post-biblical philosophy are absent. In short, there are only insignificant differences between the members of the Synod over the fact that the human soul has intellect, will, and affections, while the discussions at the Synod—not unlike the text of the Remonstrance—also make clear that the Arminians took the same view.

What was also generally accepted by both parties—even though it was not emphasized—is that these powers are ordered in a hierarchical way: the intellect leads, the will and the affections, are considered to follow its lead. This is not only a point of consensus between the orthodox delegations; the Franeker theologian Sibundus Lubbertus also mentioned it as

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30 Handelingen, p. 504; Acta, 2: 209.
32 Handelingen, p. 511; Acta, 2: 220.
34 Handelingen, p. 809; Acta, 3: 263.
35 Hoenderdaal, ‘Remonstrantie en Contraremonstrantie’ (see above, n. 3), 74 (art. 3): the human being needs to be regenerated “in verstant, affectie, oft wille, ende alle crachten (in intellect, affectie of will, and all powers)”; cf. Schaff, ed., Creeds (see above, n. 13), 3: 547.
37 See Handelingen, pp. 490 (Swiss delegation; Acta, 2: 192); 779 (South Holland delegation, Acta, 3: 227; see also 784, Acta 3: 234). This view is cited as the Remonstrants’ view by the Emden delegation (Handelingen, p. 524; Acta 2: 235, quoting the Arminians at the Conference of The Hague: “... in voluntate non potuit talis infusio fieri, quippe quae ex se libera est ad volendum bonum vel malum, et ab opere suo vel bona vel mala denominanda est, quod mens illi monstraret, et quo affectus illam impellerent”; cf. H. Brand, ed., Collatio [see above, n. 19], p. 298), and by the Walloon delegation (Handelingen, p. 843; Acta, 3: 303).
an aspect of a free will doctrine about which there was no conflict whatsoever between Remonstrants and Contra-Remonstrants.\textsuperscript{38} In an article on ‘Will and Intellect in the New England Mind,’ published in 1972, Norman S. Fiering suggested that Arminian theology is especially hospitable to an intellectualist approach in which the intellect is considered to lead the will.\textsuperscript{39} He wrote: “… intellectualism can lead rather easily to a belief in salvation by effort and endeavor, whereas the pietistic voluntarist can only wait on divine grace for redemption.”\textsuperscript{40} Fiering acknowledged, of course, that “there has always been a completely orthodox intellectualist tradition in reformed Protestantism.” His suggestion that Pelagianism and Arminianism are intimately related to the intellectualist theory\textsuperscript{41} is in itself very interesting. As Richard Muller has argued, Arminius himself attributed a leading role to the intellect.\textsuperscript{42} Yet available evidence from the Synod of Dordt suggests that Arminianism and Reformed orthodoxy did not disagree about the leading function of the intellect.

\textit{The Influence of Sin on the Human Soul}

Both Arminians and Contra-Remonstrants agreed that there is a difference between how the soul was immediately after creation and how it is now, after the Fall.\textsuperscript{43} Yet there was a profound disagreement on the way both parties assessed the impact of sin. What the Synod especially rejected is the Arminian view that the human will is not, or is not drastically, affected by sin.

The common view of the Reformed delegations was that the human being received various gifts from God (such as righteousness and so on) when it was created. These gifts were lost when Adam and Eve sinned in Paradise. They are restored, to a certain extent, by the Divine act

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\textsuperscript{38} Handelingen, p. 771; Acta, 3: 216: “Homo irregenitus habet liberum arbitrium. Sponte enim et proprio motu eligit aut repudiat, quod intellectus eligendum et repudiandum censet. Neque de hac re controversia est.”


\textsuperscript{40} Fiering, ‘Will and Intellect’ (see above, n. 39), p. 551.

\textsuperscript{41} Both quotations: Fiering, ‘Will and Intellect’ (see above, n. 39), p. 550.


\textsuperscript{43} On this theme, see e.g. Peter Harrison, \textit{The Fall of Man and the Foundations of Science} (Cambridge, 2007), though Arminius and Arminianism are not discussed here.
\end{footnotesize}
of regeneration. In this way there are two essential factors that have a significant and real impact on the disposition of the human person: the first is the Fall, and the second is regeneration.

Some delegations offered specific elaborations of the distinction between the created and fallen conditions of humanity. With respect to the will, the delegation from Hesse made a clear distinction between how it is “according to its essence (De libero arbitrio, secundum essentiam suam considerato)” and how it is “according to its accidental powers (… secundum vires suas accidentales considerato).” The essence of the will is not changed, but with respect to the non-essential attributes the “state of sin (status peccati)” is very different from “the state of grace (status gratiae)” and both states are profoundly significant for a human being.44 The Bremen delegation more broadly distinguished a fourfold condition of free will, depending on the different states of “innocence, misery, grace, and glory,” respectively.45 In a comparable way, the Synod members from South Holland contrasted the “state” of mental powers—distinguished as intellect, will and affections—“after the Fall (De statu hominis in lapsu)” with how these powers are disposed when the person is changed by regeneration.46 Intellect, will, and affections are still there after the Fall, but they have lost the gifts (praeclera dona) with which they were originally adorned.47 It is this contrast that deserves more specific attention.

a. Intellect

With respect to the intellect the Synod emphasized that it is completely blind in spiritual matters. One biblical text that is occasionally quoted in this regard is Paul’s statement in his second letter to the Corinthians 3,5 that “we are [not] sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves” (AV)—which was interpreted in the sense that we are unable to think something really good.48 This point was also admitted explicitly in the

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44 Handelingen, pp. 485–489; Acta 2: 184–188.
47 Handelingen, p. 779; Acta, 3: 227.
Remonstrance. The Contra-Remonstrants assumed that humans have a natural knowledge of God, but they were very careful not to overestimate the quality of this knowledge. The Emden delegation even stated that “by natural light” we cannot “attain to the true knowledge of the Creator,” because for this, Jesus Christ must also be known.

In addition, the essential result of all that God has let humans retain after the Fall is that they are without excuse for their ungodliness. This assessment, of course, repeated the Pauline view as expressed in chapter one of the letter to the Romans. Human beings still have a natural intellectual ability in civil and human matters, but even with respect to these earthly affairs the South Holland delegation emphasized the dependence of the intellect upon Divine help in order to function well.

As far as can be seen from the Synod Acts, the Arminians admitted the influence of sin on the human intellect, but they differed from the Synod on at least two points that seem to be related with how the intellect is assessed.

(1) In the first place, Arminians distinguished themselves from the common Reformed view by attributing a positive role to the “light of nature (lumen naturae).” Several delegations accused the Arminians of considering natural light as ‘grace’ or as a ‘first grace’ and, accordingly,
of repeating the error made by Pelagius and his followers, who blurred the distinction between nature and grace.\footnote{Palatinate delegation (Handelingen, pp. 480–481; Acta, 2: 177–179), Hesse delegation (Handelingen, p. 489; Acta, 2: 191); Emden delegation (Handelingen, pp. 517, 527; Acta, 2: 226, 240); Friesland delegation (Handelingen, p. 809; Acta, 3: 262); Groningen delegation (Handelingen, pp. 824, 826; Acta, 3: 281 [ex bono usu primae gratiae, id est luminis naturae], 283–284).}


This critique was backed up by a number of references to Arminian writings. Several delegations cited Arminius’s claim that to those who made good use of their natural abilities, “a bigger grace” or “supernatural grace” would be given.\footnote{Palatinate delegation (Handelingen, p. 516; Acta, 2: 225).}

The Emden delegation retorted that “without God’s singular grace no human being is able to make the right use of natural light that is very much obscured ….”\footnote{Palatinate delegation (Handelingen, p. 516; Acta, 2: 225).} Several delegations cited Johannes Arnoldus Corvinus’s work against Tilenus.\footnote{Palatinate delegation (Handelingen, p. 516; Acta, 2: 225).} Corvinus wrote without ambiguity that, according to Arminius,
... there is nobody who is entirely devoid of all grace, but all humans have some sparks of divine light and knowledge, which God has left to them for this reason, that they may glorify God according to the measure of their gifts ... 59

Corvinus mentioned several reasons why

Arminius prefers saying that God gives further grace to him who makes the right use of the first [grace] but denies further [grace] to him who does not make the right use of it, over seeking or placing the reason why someone lacks a certain grace in such a precise decree of reprobation as you would propose. 60

Moreover, the delegates from Emden referred to the anonymous reply to the Walcheren ministers, in which Caspar Barlaeus argued that God gives “further grace” to those who made an appropriate use “of a more common grace.” 61 The Groningen delegation referred to a disputation in


59 Ioannes Arnoldus Corvinus, Defensio sententiae D. Iacobi Arminii, de praedestinacione, gratia Dei, libero hominis arbitrio, etc., adversus eiusdem a Cl. V.D. Daniele Tileno, theoloogo Sedanensis, editam considerationem (Leiden, 1613), p. 154.

60 Corvinus, Defensio sententiae D. Iacobi Arminii (see above, n. 59), p. 156: “Ex hisce, inquam, omnibus mavult D. Arminius statuere, Deum ulteriore gratia donare prima recte utentem, eadem vero abutentem ulteriore destituere, quam causam cur quis quadam gratia careat in praeciso tali reprobationis decreto, quale tu formas, aut quaerere aut ponere.” See above, footnote 54.

61 The Emden delegation referred (Handelingen, p. 516; Acta, 2: 226) to “ad Wal. pag. 47.” See [C. Barlaeus], Epistola ecclesiastarum quos in Belgio Remonstrantes vocant, ad exterarum ecclesiistarum Reformatos doctores, pastores, theologos, qua sententiam suam de praedestinacione et annexis ei capitibus exponunt ... Opposita epistolae delegatorum classis Walachrianae ad eosdem doctores singulatim directae [Knutel 2435] (Leiden, 1617), p. 47: “Verum non suboscuris ex scriptura rationibus ac testimoniis collocis lusse putamus, interdum Deum hanc vel illam gentem, civitatem, personam, Evangelii revelatione prae alii dignari, quam ipse dignam pronunciat, non quidem ex propriae sanctitatis dignitate aliqua, sed ex gratiosa suae aestimatione, qua per naturalem legis suae noticiam, et meliorem gratiae communioris usum correctos nonnihil, idoneos judicat, quos ulteriore gratia, idque ex beneplacito suo donet, isque antefater, quos vel gratiae semel oblatae, contemptores fuisse improbos vel horrendis alioquin sceleribus mancipatos debitosque comperit.” Barlaeus was the author of this Epistola, see e.g. J.A. Worp, ‘Caspar van Baerle, II. Barlaeus als onder-regent van het Statencollege (1612–1619),’ Oud-Holland 4 (1886), 24–40, there 30.
which Simon Episcopius stressed the need for a “right disposition” in the person “who is to have faith.” The Synod, in short, criticized the Arminian notion that if a human being makes a good use of his natural capacity, he may thereby be given more grace. The Groningen delegates noted that grace, in the Bible, is not a term for natural human abilities that remained after the Fall. Grace is rather defined by being the opposite of works. Obviously, the Synod rejected the Arminian view that the natural abilities of humans could function as a bridge and starting-point from where grace could be acquired. Thus, in the Synod’s judgment, the Arminians did not sufficiently take into account the depravity of the human being.

(2) A second point that relates to how the human intellect is assessed, is the assumption that the human being has a natural ability to read and understand the Bible and what it says about Divine matters. In this
context, several delegations referred to university disputations in which Simon Episcopius had claimed that humans have this natural ability. The Synod criticized the lack of an admission that special Divine help is needed in order to understand the Bible well in these matters. Here too, the Arminian intellect seemed to be adorned with more abilities than the darkened intellect that the Contra-Remonstrants knew.

b. Will

While there are differences between Arminian and orthodox Reformed anthropology as far as the intellect and natural light is concerned, the most profound contrast is found in their respective views of the human will. This contrast can be located more precisely in three areas. There is a disagreement about the freedom of the will, about what perhaps can be called the moral quality of the will, and about the power of the will. These disagreements are also expressions of different views of the influence of sin.

A preliminary remark, however, may be helpful. The negative assessment of the powers of human free will in spiritual matters does not imply that Calvinism rejected categorically any notion of free will. At Dordrecht the Synod made it clear that the human will is free in a certain way. A few quotes may illustrate this. The delegation from Hesse stated that humans always have free will (liberum arbitrium): even “in the state of corruption” and also “in the other future heavenly life.” These Synod
members described this freedom as a liberty “to will or not to will by a deliberate election without any coercion, and by a personal and spontaneous motion, whatever the intellect has judged should be elected or rejected.”68 The representatives from Nassau and Wetteravia described the orthodox view as stating that “The will of the human being remains by its essence always free, even when it is determined towards one thing. Nor does the necessity that depends on the decree of God take away this freedom.”69 The Bremen delegation described the will in four different conditions of humankind, and stated that even “[i]n the state of misery [the will] has indeed remained free from necessity in vital, civil, and external ecclesiastical matters; also free from the necessity of this or that evil; but nevertheless it is kept under sin and misery.”70 The Synod members from Emden insisted that the human will remains free, because “[f]or the freedom of the human will it is sufficient that it is acted upon or acts with a proper and spontaneous motion, even if this motion or choice is elicited and directed from elsewhere, namely from grace.”71 The Synod members from Gelderland wrote: “The will has not been lost by sin; nor the freedom of the will. For freely the human being wills everything he wills, but as long as man is a prisoner of the devil and a servant of sin, he wills nothing but evil (albeit under the appearance of the good), either that which is materially evil, or that which is only formally [evil].”72 The


70 Handelingen, p. 504; Acta 2: 210: “In statu miseriae, mansit quidem liberum a necessitate in rebus animalibus, civilibus, et externis Ecclesiasticis: item liberum, a necessitate hujus aut illus facinoris; sed tamen tenetur sub peccato et miseria.”

71 Handelingen, p. 512; Acta 2: 220: “Ad voluntatis enim humanae libertatem satis est, si proprio et spontaneo motu et electione agatur vel agat, etiamsi is motus, ea electio, alunde, nimimum a gratia, excitetur et dirigatur.”

72 Handelingen, p. 774; Acta, 3: 220: “Voluntas per peccatum amissa non est: nec voluntatis libertas: libere enim vult homo quicquid vult; sed quamdium captivus diaboli et servus peccati est homo, nihil vult nisi malum, (sub ratione licet boni) sive materialiter id malum sit, sive formaliter tantum.” Cf. Emden delegation, Handelingen, p. 531; Acta, 2:
Synod of Dordt, then, maintained that the human will as such has spontaneous freedom—modern philosophy of religion would say that it held a “compatibilist” view of freedom.  

(1) Yet there was a fundamental disagreement with Arminians over what sort of freedom can be attributed to the will in the human being such as it is since Eve and Adam sinned. The members of the Synod rejected the Arminian idea that the will has a freedom to choose either good or evil. As the Friesland delegation noted, this idea was very different from what the Remonstrance itself had affirmed concerning the ineffectiveness of the human will. However, the view of the human will as being able to choose between good and evil was found in other Remonstrant writings.

While making this point Synod members referred to a number of Remonstrant texts. One of these was the letter that Barlaeus in 1617 addressed anonymously to foreign theologians. Even though Barlaeus considered it “impossible that the will of a non-regenerated human being can be inclined to the spiritual good,” he also maintained that the human will under all circumstances remains free “to will or not to will” and “to will or leave unwilled” a certain object; and according to him the moral quality of this object (its good or evil character) was irrelevant to the essence of this freedom.

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244: “Cum constet, et multoties inculcatum sit, hominem esse creaturam vivam, ratione praeditam et volendi potentia, idque quod vult libere, non coacte volendi.”

73 See e.g. Paul Helm, John Calvin’s Ideas (Oxford, 2004).


77 [Barlaeus], Epistola (see above, n. 61), pp. 54–55: “Semper itaque et in omni vitae hujus statu libertas voluntati essentialiter adhaeret; sed talis, qua objectum velle potest
Several delegations also referred to the 1611 Conference of The Hague, where the Remonstrants had argued that “... in the will such an infusion [of spiritual gifts] could not occur, because it is of itself free to will either good or evil ...,” and “this liberty, although it cannot exercise its power in sinful man because of the darkness of the mind and the enormity of the affections, yet it has remained in him as a part of the created nature, as Calvin testifies, commenting on Ezekiel 11,20 ...”78 There is in the human will “an innate power to will or not to will (innatam volendi ac nolendi facultatem),”79 for “God did not deprive the sinful human being of his nature, a part of which is the liberty to receive or reject whatever is proposed.”80 In other words: “... in the spiritual death [of humankind] spiritual gifts are not in the literal sense separated from the human will since they never were engraved into it, but only the freedom by which it would be capable of doing either good or evil, as has been

vel nolle, quam contrarietatis, alii specificationis vocant; aut qua objectum potest velle vel non velle, quam contradictionis sive exercitii vocant. Utramque exercitum voluntas circa media et fines non ultimos. Posteriorem solum circa finem ultimum, aut bonum in genere consideratum. Quae vero in objectis considerantur rationes boni vel mali libertatis accidentarum sunt, nec ad ejus essentiam spectant.” But compare p. 57: “... non censemus essentiale esse voluntati ad bonum aut malum se inclinare posse, quin potius impossibile hoc fuit in statu lapsu, in quo boni supernaturalis et salvifici defuit cognitio, et impossible erit post hanc vitam, in qua peccandi et malum volendi rationes probabiles menti non obversabuntur, sed in primo statu ea fuisset liberi arbitrii naturam, ut ad bonum et ad malum se inclinare possit homo.” See p. 55: “At nos, qui Remonstrantium partes tuemur ... hominis non renati voluntatem ad bonum supernaturale se inclinare posse, impossible putamus.”

78 Brand, ed., Collatio (see above, n. 19), p. 298: “Statue iam ex hujus opposito vice corporis hominem, vice animae Spiritum Dei, vel spiritualia dona, quibus Deus hominem dotavit, nempe in mente habitum scientiae vel inhabitantem cognitionem rerum supernaturalium, in affectibus sanctitatem infusionam, spem, metum, etc. sed in voluntate non poterat talis infusion fieri, quippe quae ex se libera est ad volendum vel bonum vel malum, et ab opere suo vel bona vel mala nominanda est, quod mens illi monstraret, et quo affectus illam impellenter, sine qua libertate fieri non potuisset, ut homo peccaret.” “Quae libertas quanquam non possit facultatem suam in homine peccatore exercere propter mentis tenebras, et affectuum enormitatem, reliqua tamen facta est in eo, tanquam pars naturae creatae, uti Calvinus testatur in Ezch. 11, 20, modo quoque citato.” Cf. references by the delegations from Emden (Handelingen, p. 524; Acta, 2: 236) and Gelderland (Handelingen, p. 775; Acta, 3: 222).

79 Brand, ed., Collatio (see above, n. 19), p. 300 (cf. 302); cf. the reference by the Emden delegation (Handelingen, p. 524; Acta, 2: 236).

80 Brand, ed., Collatio (see above, n. 19), p. 301: “Deus hominem peccatore natura non privavit, cujus pars est voluntas, cujus proprium est libertas, ad rem propositam vel recipiendam vel rejeciendam”; cf. citations by the delegations from Emden (Handelingen, p. 524; Acta, 2: 236), Gelderland (Handelingen, p. 775; Acta, 3: 222), and Groningen (Handelingen, p. 823; Acta, 3: 280).
said.” Arminians defined the freedom of the will as the ability to choose good or evil. This view tends to consider the will itself as being neutral between the two, as being open to either choice.

The Synod, in contrast, emphasized that the will of fallen humankind is “dead” in spiritual matters, inclined to choose evil, and in reality choosing evil every single day. Since the Fall, in other words, the human will has no ability to choose well spiritually: “it is not free with regard to the spiritual good, but only and totally inclined to evil (libera non sit ad spirituale bonum; sed tantum, et prorsus, feratur ad malum).” For Arminians, however, this freedom to choose good or evil is still at the heart of what human freedom is per se. This is one major disagreement on the will that is pointed out in the Acta.

(2) Another disagreement between Arminians and the Synod is related to this. The delegations repeatedly cited the Arminian statement that the human will was not equipped with “gifts” at the time of its creation, and that these gifts accordingly could not be lost because of human sin either. The Synod’s rejection of the view that the will never possessed any gifts of righteousness that could be lost at the Fall made it into the ‘rejection of errors’ in the Canons. The key passage expresses:

81 Brand, ed., Collatio (see above, n. 19), p. 298: “… at in spirituali morte non separatur proprie dona spiritualia ab hominis voluntate, quia illi nunquam ei fuerant insita, sed tantum libertas, qua posset vel bonum vel malum facere, ut dictum est.” Cf. the reference by the Groningen delegation (Handelingen, p. 823; Acta, 3: 280).

82 E.g. British delegation (Handelingen, p. 474; Acta, 2: 170; Milton, ed., British Delegation [see above, n. 48], p. 258); Swiss delegation (Handelingen, pp. 491, 492; Acta, 2: 193, 194); Utrecht delegation (Handelingen, p. 804; Acta, 3: 257: “Voluntas hominis in statu corruptionis, non modo per tenebras intellectus et affectuum ataxiam, sed etiam per inhaerentem sibi perversitatem mortua est, ineptaque ad supernaturale bonum volendum aut eligendum.”).

83 E.g. Swiss delegation (Handelingen, p. 491; Acta, 2: 193), etc.

84 North Holland delegation (Handelingen, p. 787; Acta, 3: 238).

85 British delegation (Handelingen, p. 476; Acta, 2: 172–173; Milton, ed., British Delegation [see above, n. 48], pp. 261–262); Hesse delegation (Handelingen, p. 487; Acta, 2: 187); Bremen delegation (Handelingen, p. 506; Acta, 2: 212); Emden delegation (Handelingen, pp. 517, 523–524; Acta, 2: 226, 235–236); Dutch professors (Handelingen, pp. 768–769; Acta, 3: 213); Zeeland delegation (Handelingen, p. 798; Acta, 3: 251); Utrecht delegation (Handelingen, p. 805; Acta, 3: 258–259); Friesland delegation (Handelingen, p. 808; Acta, 3: 262); Overijssel delegation (Handelingen, p. 818; Acta, 3: 273); Groningen delegation (Handelingen, p. 823; Acta, 3: 280). Cf. South Holland delegation (Handelingen, p. 781; Acta, 3: 229); North Holland delegation (Handelingen, p. 787; Acta, 3: 238).

86 Canons 3–4, reiectio errorum 2 and 3; Bakhuizen van den Brink, Belijdenisgeschriften (see above, n. 4), p. 261; Schaff, ed., Creeds (see above, n. 13), 3: 569; Milton, ed., British Delegation (see above, n. 48), p. 313. See L. Vroegindeweyj, ‘De anthropologie der...
ing this Arminian view was articulated at the Conference held at The Hague in 1611 and has been cited above.\textsuperscript{87} At The Hague this view was supported by Johannes Uyttenbogaert, Adrianus Bor, Nicolaus Grevinchoven, Johannes Arnoldus (Corvinus), Eduard Poppius, and Simon Episcopius.

In this context the Church \textit{Classis} of Walcheren also referred to the Conference of The Hague in a letter to foreign theologians.\textsuperscript{88} In his reply to this Walcheren letter Caspar Barlaeus addressed this issue and Barlaeus’s discussion itself was subsequently mentioned by a few delegations at the Synod of Dordrecht.\textsuperscript{89} According to Barlaeus, prior to the Fall the human will had no infused good habits. The reason is that God desired Adam’s obedience to be completely free.\textsuperscript{90} Barlaeus, however, did not want to deny that when a sinner is regenerated the will does acquire “habits of virtues.” But if anyone denied the latter too, this did not amount to a heretical position according to Barlaeus. Philosophers and theologians had for centuries been debating about the question “whether the virtues of moral habits are subjectively in the will or in the sensitive desire (\textit{Utrum virtutes sive morales habitus subjective sint in voluntate, an in appetitu sensitivo}).” Barlaeus doubted whether any theologian would be able to mention a biblical text that could unambiguously prove that “moral habits are subjectively in the will.”\textsuperscript{91}

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\textsuperscript{87} See above, footnote 81. Cf. references by the delegations from Hesse (\textit{Handelingen}, p. 487; \textit{Acta}, 2: 187), Emden (\textit{Handelingen}, pp. 517, 524; \textit{Acta}, 2: 226, 235), and Groningen (\textit{Handelingen}, p. 823; \textit{Acta}, 3: 280). The same passage is the one meant by delegations who referred to the Dutch edition (\textit{Schriftelijke conferentie} [see above, n. 19], p. 250), that is, the Dutch professors (\textit{Handelingen}, p. 768, \textit{Acta}, 3: 213), delegations from Zeeland (\textit{Handelingen}, p. 798; \textit{Acta}, 3: 251), and Utrecht (\textit{Handelingen}, p. 805; \textit{Acta}, 3: 258–259). The \textit{articuli} published by De Groot, ‘Stukken’ (see above, n. 18), 158, refer to the same view articulated in the papers of the Conference of The Hague.

\textsuperscript{88} The Walcheren letter is printed in \cite{Barlaeus, Epistola} (see above, n. 61), pp. 115–133, there p. 122.

\textsuperscript{89} See references to \cite{Barlaeus, Epistola} (see above, n. 61), pp. 56–57, by the Emden delegation (\textit{Handelingen}, p. 524; \textit{Acta}, 2: 235), Zeeland delegation (\textit{Handelingen}, p. 798; \textit{Acta}, 3: 251), and the Dutch professors (\textit{Handelingen}, p. 768; \textit{Acta}, 3: 213).

\textsuperscript{90} \cite{Barlaeus, Epistola} (see above, n. 61), pp. 56–57: “Etenim cum ab Adamo Deus obedientiam exegerit libera voluntate praestandam, inconveniens futurum fuisset opinamur, si ipsum obedientiae habitum in voluntatem infudisset, quod tamen habitu scientiae et affectuum sanctitate, sine quibus obedientiam primitus praeestari vix possibile erat, affirmare, videtur convenientissimum.”

\textsuperscript{91} \cite{Barlaeus, Epistola} (see above, n. 61), p. 57. Cf. for instance Thomas Aquinas, \textit{Summa theologiae} 1–2, 56.6, in \textit{Opera omnia}, vol. 6 (Rome, 1891), pp. 361–362 (“\textit{Utrum voluntas possit esse subjectum virtutis}”).
This Arminian view of a created human will that lacked any gifts of righteousness was linked by the Emden delegation to the ‘Jesuit’ doctrine of a creation of humankind “in pure nature (in puris naturalibus).” This reference can be understood in the light of a statement made by the Jesuit theologian Luis de Molina:

... human nature after sin is correctly said to be deprived of the supernatural gifts that it had in Adam; but if it had been created in [the state of] pure nature, it would not be said to be deprived of these gifts, because it would never have had these before.

This quotation shows that, at least in Molina’s perspective, the state of pure nature is understood as lacking supernatural gifts of integrity. However, this quote also makes clear that according to Molina humans actually were not created in a status of mere nature, but were adorned with “supernatural gifts.” Although Molina admitted that the actual state of the human will since the Fall does not differ from a hypothetical state in ‘pure nature,’ the Jesuit theologian did not go as far as the

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94 See also Molina, Concordia 14.16.2, ed. Rabeneck (see above, n. 93), pp. 91–92: “Cum autem disputatione 3 ostensum sit pares eademque esse arbitrii vires, sive spectetur in statu naturae corruptae seclusus auxiliis ac donis sive in puris naturalibus, necesse non erit miscere sermonem de eo in puris naturalibus, quoniam quae dicentur de statu naturae corruptae seclusus quocumque particullari auxilio similiter intelligendi sunt de statu hominis in puris naturalibus considerati.” Cf. Concordia 14.19.3.3, pp. 108–109: “Tertia, quoniam liberum arbitrium, ut disputatione tertia est ostensum, eadem prorsus vires habet in statu naturae lapsae quas habuisset, si homo esset conditus in statu mere naturali ad finem solum naturalem Deusque statuisset nullum particularum auxilio illi conferre; denique eadem vires habet quas haberet, si Deus talem illum
Arminians at the Conference of The Hague. Citing the Councils of Trent (1547) and Orange (529), Molina admitted that the human will has been “weakened” and “diminished” since the Fall. Arminians, in other words, had a more optimistic view about the current integrity of the human will than Molina.

The Synod, in contrast, re-affirmed that there was an inherent righteousness given to the will when humans were created, but this righteousness has been lost since the Fall. This difference between the Synod and the Remonstrants is profound. According to the Arminians the human will, of all mental faculties, is least affected by sin and does not really need to be repaired. The North Holland delegation noted that this was at odds with what Arminians said in the Remonstrance of 1610. In that document Arminians spoke about the need for a total renewal of the human being, his will included. Arminius had made similar statements. This was, of course, a position to which Reformed

condidisset qualem Philosophi naturales esse crediderunt qualemque sola naturalis et moralis philosophia considerat.” Both texts are referred to in Leydecker, Historia (see above, n. 93), pp. 365–366.

95 Molina, Concordia 14.13.8, ed. Rabeneck (see above, n. 93), p. 22: “Atque hinc etiam emanavit dictum illud: hominem per peccatum spoliatum esse gratuis et vulneratum fuisse in naturalibus liberumque arbitrium per peccatum non fuisse quidem extinctum, at fuisse attenuatum et inclinatum imminutamque fuisse libertatem illius, ut Concilium Tridentinum sess. 6 cap. 1 et Arausicanum canone primo affirmat. Loquuntur namque comparatione virium quas liberum arbitrium habebat in statu innocentiae ex praesentia iustitiae originalis, non vero comparatione virium quas habuisset, si homo in puris naturalibus esset conditus.” For the text of the Council of Trent, also cited by e.g. Martin Becanus, Theologia scholastica, pars secunda, 2 parts (Duaci, 1627), 1: 55, see Peter Hünemann, ed., Heinrich Denzinger, Kompendium der Glaubensbekenntnisse und kirchlichen Lehrentscheidungen, 375th ed. (Freiburg, 1991), p. 503 (No. 1521; session 6, c. 1). For the second Council of Orange, see ibid., p. 179 (No. 378, canon 8).

96 But see Handelingen, p. 844 (Acta, 3: 305), where the Walloon delegation summarized the Arminian view as referring to a “supernatural power awarded to the will (voluntati concessam supernaturalem potentiam).”

97 Handelingen, p. 788; Acta, 3: 239: one of the areas in which Arminians contradicted themselves was “in eo quod hoc tertio Articulo ponunt, necessarium esse, ut homo per Spiritum S. regeneretur, et renovetur. Mente, affectibus, seu voluntate, et omnibus facultatibus.” Cf. Hoenderdaal, ‘Remonstrantie en Contraremonstrantie’ (see above, n. 3), p. 74.

orthodoxy could have no objections. As the Synod noted, however, elsewhere the view was articulated that whereas the human intellect and affections need to be renewed in regeneration,99 the will never had any gifts that could be lost and needed to be restored by grace. In this view, wrong choices of the will are attributed to the influence that a sinful intellect and sinful affections exert on the will.100 This evidence concerning later Arminianism is well compatible with one of the conclusions that Richard Muller drew with respect to Jacob Arminius himself: “… Arminius consistently placed the problematic character of the fallen intellect and its need for proper illumination at the forefront of the discussion.”101 Obviously, in the Remonstrant texts quoted by the Synod, the will in itself was not the real problem. It was only indirectly influenced by sin, namely by the misinformation or false guidance provided by the intellect. This constitutes the second major disagreement concerning the will.

(3) A third factor, indicating the power attributed to the will, is the issue of resistibility of God’s grace. The Arminian will can resist God’s grace. The Arminian intellect, however, cannot resist. The Utrecht delegation noted that according to Episcopius the Arminian intellect “is irresistibly illuminated” when confronted with biblical revelation or preaching.102 This view reminded the Utrecht delegates of an axiom supported by Arminians at the conference in The Hague, that “the intellect cannot withstand simple awareness (intellectus simplicem notitiam evitare non

99 E.g. Zeeland delegation (Handelingen, p. 798; Acta, 3: 251). The Utrecht delegation, however, defined the Arminian regeneration as a regeneration of the human intellect; see Handelingen, p. 802; Acta, 3: 255.
102 Utrecht delegation (Handelingen, p. 802; Acta, 3: 255). The delegation referred to Episcopius’s public disputation on the perspicuity of Scripture, thesis 3; in his Opera (see above, n. 65), pars 2, 391a: “Legentes igitur et audientes, quibus perspicua Scriptura est, non eos tantum statuimus, qui peculiari quadam et immediata luce interius collustrati sunt, aut qui sibi ipsis hujusmodi luce et judicio donati ac praeediti soli videntur; sed omnes in univesum, quicunque et qualescumque tandem esse possint, summae, mediae, infimae sortis homines, in quibus, vel dictamen naturalis rationis et judiciij aut omnino obliteratum non est, aut saltem non enormiter vittatum; vel in quibus supina aut voluntaria quaedam negligenta, manifesta inadverentia, praepudicitia sententia, aut dedita militia locum non habet.”
Other delegates made similar comments. The evidence, however, is not completely unanimous, for the Utrecht delegation on the other hand noted a passage in which Arminians seemed to claim that the intellect, too, is able to resist. The Arminian will, in any case, has the ability to resist God’s grace. In light of the power that is thus accorded to the will, it is not surprising to find that several delegations accused the Arminians of attempting to bolster human free will.

c. Affections

The Synod indicated much less disagreement over the sinful status of the affections, the third component of the soul, after the Fall. The

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105 Utrecht delegation (Handelingen, pp. 803; Acta, 3: 256), referring to Schriftelieke conferentie (see above, n. 19), p. 268, and to Bertius’s Scripta adversaria (see above, n. 19), p. 300: “Ioan. XIV.17 Agitur de infidelibus et impii hominibus, qui Spiritum veritatis non possunt accipere, hoc est, vere et ex animo adstipulari Spiritui docenti veritatem, quem ille Apostolis promittit, quia eum ipsi neque vident, neque norunt, ut qui tantum ament ac norint ea quae sibi placent, quaenque non pugnant adversus ipsorum cupiditatem, sicut facit hic Spiritus, qui docturus est veritatem, ad quam caeci essent et obtenebrati mentibus.” (cf. Brand, ed., Collatio [see above, n. 19], p. 320).

106 Palatinate delegation (Handelingen, pp. 482–483; Acta, 2: 181); North Holland delegation (Handelingen, p. 790; Acta, 3: 241); Utrecht delegation (Handelingen, p. 807; Acta, 3: 261); Emden delegation (Handelingen, p. 520; Acta, 2: 231), referring to “Remonstr. pag. 273, ubi dicunt, mentem nostrum ipsum scire effugere non posse, sed velit nolit, cogatur illud cognoscere.” See Brand, ed., Collatio (see above, n. 19), p. 273: “... irresistibilim Spiritus Sancti virtutem in mente nostra agnoscamus, quando Deus nobis voluntatem suam patefacit, quoniam mens ipsum scire non potest effugere, et in animo nostro, quando illum pulsat. Quia velimus, nolimus, cogimur illud sentire.”

107 See, however, the letter of the Walcheren ministers, in [Barlaeus], Epistola (see above, n. 61), p. 121: “… Afectus denique inclinationem ataxiai quidem, non tamen perversitate ad scelera quaelibet instigante hominem laborare ….” The Walcheren ministers referred to those Remonstrants “quibus disiplicet hominem in odium Dei et proximi natura proclivem statui” (ibid., p. 123). Cf. the Remonstrants’ plea for adapting the statement of the Heidelberg Catechism that “I am inclined by nature to hate God and my neighbour (Natura enim propensus sum ad odium Dei et proximi)” (question 5; Bakhuizen van den Brink, ed., Belijdenisgeschriften, [see above, n. 4], p. 156), in their Acta et scripta synodalia (see above, n. 14), p. 104: “Num verba haec, Natura propensus sum etc. omiti
South Holland delegation, however, saw reason to state that human affections cannot, on their own, make humans suitable for receiving grace or produce true repentance that originates from the fear of God. The same delegation also rejected the view “that after the Fall no infusion of holiness takes place in the affections.” The Emden delegation denied that the “common grace of illumination” of the intellect is sufficient to “renew” the heart and affections. This rebuttal, however, aims at the Arminian view of the intellect rather than of the affections.

Conclusions

This brief survey of anthropological positions of Arminians and Contra-Remonstrants leads to a few further considerations. First of all, at the Synod of Dordt and in the discussions surrounding it, anthropology was a religious, a decidedly Christian, anthropology, that is to say: sin and grace are the realities from which the human being, including his intellect, will and affections, is approached, and by which the human soul is characterized. Those delegations who adopted the classical tri-partition of the soul in intellect, will, and affections may, by so doing so, have integrated a view that had been articulated by philosophers, yet innocence, sin, and grace were the decisive realities from which they understood these three powers of the human soul.

In the second place, if the question is asked whether there was a pattern pervading the specific disagreements that the Synod identified, the answer can be that the rejected Arminian positions represented a more optimistic view of the human being as less weakened by sin and better equipped to acquire grace. The Synod addressed an anthropology in which the human being was considered capable of understanding the Bible concerning matters of salvation as well as of making good use of natural light and thus of receiving additional grace; he was considered able to choose good or evil, and to reject or accept grace. The Synod on the other hand argued that the human being is spiritually blind and dead, and it expected regeneration from God’s irresistible grace alone (the human

vel saltem in gratiam infirmiorum aliquia ratione emolliir praestet, aut Scripturae phrases substituit, licet haec ipsa commode explicata nihil in se falsitatis contineant ut et duriuscula nonnullis videri possint.”

being in the first instance being “merely passive”\textsuperscript{111}). The controversy of Dordt was not a mere misunderstanding, but a real disagreement over anthropology and the grace of God.

The previous discussion of how the Synod perceived Arminian anthropology also suggests that the human will was central to Arminianism. Although the intellect is attributed by Episcopius an ability to understand supernatural revelation without supernatural assistance, and although several Arminians consider natural light as making possible a first step for humans towards acquiring grace, the will is still the faculty least affected by sin since it did not lose original gifts of righteousness, and the will is also more powerful (it can resist, whereas the intellect—according to several Arminians—cannot).\textsuperscript{112} It is, therefore, plausible to conclude that the Arminian anthropology was not primarily rationalist, but first and foremost an anthropology that focused on responsibility and choice. The Synod argued that the Arminian insistence on human will and free choice could not be combined with the profession of God’s sovereignty and, as we have seen, the Synod also disagreed with the optimistic anthropological premises.

In Arminian anthropology, as the Synod read it, the human will was central. It may be worthwhile to return, finally, to Fiering’s observation on the relationship between Arminianism and intellectualism. Perhaps the claim can be made that inherent in Arminianism is a certain impetus toward shifting the focus to human reason. According to the Arminian


viewpoint, the will is—while being decisive—not the main problem. At least it did not lose gifts at the Fall. This can, on the one hand, explain the central focus on the human will and its decisions. On the other hand, however, it can be argued that the main obstacle for a human being’s salvation is located in the intellect, given the intellect's leading role in providing the will with correct information. Several delegations cited the Arminian view that the renewal of the intellect (and of the affections) precedes new choices of the will. This might suggest that for Arminians it is all the more important to get the intellect right, and to focus on its improvement.

113 Cf. the Emden delegation (Handelingen, p. 525; Acta, 2: 237, with reference); Hesse delegation (Handelingen, pp. 489–490; Acta, 2: 191, with reference); Zeeland delegation (Handelingen, 798; Acta, 3: 251 with reference); Walloon delegation (Handelingen, p. 844; Acta 3: 304).